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New York

President: Mr. Han Seung-soo ..... (Republic of Korea)

The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

Agenda item 9 (*continued*)

General debate

Address by The Honourable Manasseh Sogavare, Prime Minister of Solomon Islands

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of Solomon Islands.

The Honourable Manasseh Sogavare, Prime Minister of Solomon Islands, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency The Honourable Manasseh Sogavare, Prime Minister of Solomon Islands, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Sogavare (Solomon Islands): At the outset, let me express my sincere felicitations and those of my Government and the people of the Solomon Islands, on your election, Sir, as President of the General Assembly at its fifty-sixth session. As you know, the Republic of Korea and Solomon Islands enjoy very warm and cordial relations. My delegation is therefore delighted to see you presiding over this Assembly. Our gratitude also goes to your predecessor, Mr. Harri Holkeri, for the efficient manner in which he conducted the work of the previous session. I also congratulate the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, on his well-deserved reappointment for another term in office, and on the award, to him and to the United Nations, of the 2001 Nobel Peace Prize.

The horrendous terrorist attack on the United States on 11 September was an attack against humanity. What we witnessed on that day was unimaginable. It brought pain and loss on an inconceivable scale; there can be no justification for it. This morning I visited ground zero to pay my respects to the thousands of innocent people buried there and to reaffirm the solidarity of Solomon Islands with the Government and the people of the United States of America.

Terrorism is an evil phenomenon which must be eradicated. Individuals and organizations perpetrating such evil must be brought to justice. Similarly, States that harbour or provide safe haven for terrorist activities must play their full part in eradicating this menace.

The war against international terrorism must aim to have far-reaching solutions, rather than be merely reactive. Effective international cooperation is critical to the global implementation of anti-terrorism measures, in order to deny terrorists any weak spots that they could exploit to launch their criminal operations. Solomon Islands is taking steps towards the ratification of the various international conventions against terrorism. Countries such as mine need technical support in law enforcement, surveillance and information-sharing so as to effectively implement these instruments. In this regard, I welcome President Bush's offer to help countries that need assistance in

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strengthening and implementing anti-terrorism strategies.

While the war against terrorism is a matter of urgency, the United Nations should not underestimate the continuing need to address other global issues that also threaten human security. Persistent poverty and underdevelopment; environmental degradation; internal conflict and war; the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, as well as of small arms and light weapons; trade in illicit drugs; the deadly spread of HIV/AIDS; and violations of human rights are all complex global problems that continue to demand concerted global responses.

With their limited resources and capacity, small island developing States like Solomon Islands are unable to cope with the magnitude of these problems. Post-cold-war security now rightly embraces human, environmental, economic and political dimensions.

The inter-ethnic crisis that the Solomon Islands experienced between 1998 and 2000, and its devastating impact on the country, is a sobering reminder that peace and development are intrinsically linked. One cannot be achieved if the other fails. In most situations, including in our case, peace takes precedence, as no rebuilding is possible without security and stability. My Government has worked resolutely to bring the warring factions to the table. Our efforts culminated in the signing of the Townsville Peace Agreement in October 2000 and of the Marau Peace Agreement earlier this year.

The Townsville Agreement led to the cessation of the conflict. However, progress in the implementation of the Agreement's disarmament provisions has been slow. With a considerable number of high-powered weapons still to be handed in, the peace process remains fragile. A review of the Agreement was begun recently, but it has been temporarily suspended. We are confident that the review process will soon resume in order to positively consolidate the ongoing peace process.

Mr. Ileka (Democratic Republic of the Congo), Vice-President, took the Chair.

At this juncture, I wish to acknowledge the contributions of our development partners towards the peace process, in particular the Governments of the Republic of China on Taiwan, Australia, New Zealand and the countries of the European Union. My Government is also grateful to civil society institutions, including the churches and non-governmental organizations, for their efforts, especially at the height of the crisis.

The challenge is far from over. With a shattered economy and a delicate peace process, the task of rebuilding the country and ensuring lasting peace is formidable. It requires the patience, cooperation and commitment of all Solomon Islanders. My Government has adopted a National Peace Plan and Programme of Action aimed at addressing the root causes of the conflict through meaningful dialogue and discussion and by encouraging a more participatory approach in the country's socio-economic and political development. The recent ruling by our judiciary affirming the constitutional legitimacy of my Government has given us additional resolve to implement this Plan and Programme of Action. In this connection, the understanding and support of the international community, in particular our development partners, is important.

Development cooperation should strive to reduce the vulnerability of societies to violent conflicts. Aid should go beyond immediate humanitarian needs. It has to be linked to peace-building initiatives in order to make peace sustainable. Development assistance could, therefore, be a means of conflict prevention and an instrument for peace-building.

There is a clear imperative to address the poverty and inequality that exist among our countries. But there is also an irrefutable common interest for doing so, as many of today's problems — especially in the least developed countries — are rooted in underdevelopment and poverty. The timely implementation of the outcomes of the Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries is therefore imperative. We are fully aware that primary responsibility to put in place the necessary reforms for poverty reduction and economic growth lies with the least developed countries. Education, infrastructure development and improving basic health services remain priority issues for Solomon Islands.

Undoubtedly, investment of overseas development assistance resources to support our efforts can accelerate development. Donor countries and agencies must be more inclined to ensure that they do not give with one hand, only to take away with the other. In a globalizing world, donor partners' policies

in virtually every sector — including trade and investment, financial systems and the environment — must help promote development for the poorest. In the absence of that, the goal of attaining sustainable development and managing globalization in a way that maximizes its benefits for all will be difficult to realize.

In the same spirit, I call on the development partners to consider more practical and realistic measures to deal with the huge amount of debt burden that poor countries continue to shoulder. Development partners must continue to positively consider measures such as writing off debts; for even the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Debt Initiative and the Paris Club initiatives to address the problems of highly indebted and poor developing countries have been cumbersome and slow.

The International Conference on Financing for Development, which is to be held in Mexico next March, offers a unique opportunity for achieving consensus on how to mobilize new and additional resources for development. Solomon Islands looks forward to participating actively in the Conference.

Agenda 21 remains a valid blueprint for the management of the Earth's environment and the sustainable development of its resources. The World Summit on Sustainable Development, to be held in Johannesburg next year, 10 years after Rio, should reach consensus on ways and means to ensure wider and effective implementation of Agenda 21 and subsequent international programmes, including the Barbados Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States.

The ocean and its bounty continue to be a principal resource for Solomon Islands. Our priorities concerning oceans include sustainable fisheries management, habitat protection and avoidance of marine pollution. For us, the success of national development planning depends significantly on the continued health of the marine environment.

The unique circumstances of small island developing States must be fully understood by the international community as we strive to address the serious threats of natural disasters, climate change and sea-level rise. The Kyoto Protocol remains a significant first step on the path to ensuring effective global action to combat climate change. The international community must now build on the outcomes of the seventh session of the Conference of the Parties to the Framework Convention and work further towards the resolution of all outstanding negotiating issues.

We must recall the vision which the United Nations was created to serve, i.e. that each and every human being deserves to live in dignity, be well nourished, be educated, have access to decent health care and decent work, be respected and consulted, and be able to develop their talents and creativity. Our challenge is to strengthen the United Nations and other international institutions to strive more effectively towards that vision. Solomon Islands remains committed to the reform initiatives of the Secretary-General.

This session should also continue with efforts to make the work of the General Assembly more efficient and effective. Furthermore, discussions on the reform of the Security Council have gone on for too long without substantial progress. Greater flexibility is required in order for this process to be completed. The goal is to have a more democratic, transparent and effective Security Council.

In what is surely one of the bitter ironies of our times, free and democratic Taiwan, home to 23 million people and a peace-loving country, has been excluded not only from the United Nations and all its specialized agencies but also from nearly every other intergovernmental organization in the world. Although the Republic of China on Taiwan willingly abides by international norms, standards and obligations, it is not able to enjoy the same normal standard privileges and treatment accorded to others. This is simply unfair and unjust. The time has come to reconsider the exclusion of the Republic of China from the United Nations. The Republic of China on Taiwan was a founding member of the Organization. It is a model of economic success and democratic politics. Taiwan has continued to share its development experiences with the wider international community when given the opportunity. Its continuing assistance during humanitarian crises also deserves full commendation.

Solomon Islands' appeal for Taiwan's representation and participation in the United Nations system is premised on the principles of justice, dignity and the right of the people of Taiwan to be heard and represented in the international arena and for them to be able to enjoy the same benefits that the rest of us enjoy. My Government firmly believes that Taiwan's

membership in the United Nations will effectively serve to facilitate peaceful dialogue between the two Chinas and provide a solid basis for a lasting reconciliation between them. Dialogue is the only means to resolve differences, and parity and mutual respect must be the foundation upon which both sides can build trust and confidence. The United Nations is the best forum to nurture that trust and confidence. The issue of Taiwan's membership is consistent with the United Nations principle of universality. But, above all, it must be acknowledged that the Republic of China on Taiwan is fully committed to fulfilling the obligations of the United Nations Charter.

Finally, next month my country is going to the polls to elect a new parliament, and thereafter a new Government will be formed. This election manifests our continuing commitment to constitutional and parliamentary democracy. It is a critical election, as it will confer a new mandate for the next Government to continue with the ever-important responsibilities of ensuring the rule of law, rebuilding the economy and further consolidating the current peace process.

Those are difficult tasks, but we are determined to write a new page in our young history — a new page that should provide for ethnic harmony and co-existence, comprehensive and lasting peace, economic prosperity, and, above all, engender and nurture a better future and hope for our children and future generations.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of Solomon Islands for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Manasseh Sogavare, Prime Minister of Solomon Islands, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Osmonakun Ibraimov, State Secretary of the Kyrgyz Republic

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the State Secretary of the Kyrgyz Republic.

Mr. Osmonakun Ibraimov, State Secretary of the Kyrgyz Republic, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Osmonakun Ibraimov, State Secretary of the Kyrgyz Republic, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Ibraimov (Kyrgyzstan) (*spoke in Russian*): I would like at the outset to join in all the congratulations that have been extended to the President on his election as President of the fifty-sixth session of the General Assembly. I would like to assure him that our delegation is ready to cooperate fully with him and also to wish him, on behalf of the Kyrgyz delegation, success in carrying out his duties.

Our delegation would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, on his re-election to a second term of office and also on his winning the Nobel Peace Prize, together with the United Nations, this year. We consider that this award was well deserved.

The work of this session is taking place at an extremely complex time for the international community. Today, from this lofty rostrum, on behalf of the people of Kyrgyzstan, I convey our deepest condolences to the people and the Government of the United States in connection with the tragic events of 11 September this year, which claimed many victims.

Terrorism has laid down an extremely dangerous challenge to all of civilized humanity, democracy and freedom. In this context, the efforts of the international community aimed at combating terrorism, first and foremost within the framework of the United Nations, are fully supported by Kyrgyzstan, and our Government is taking all necessary measures to implement Security Council resolutions 1368 (2001) and 1373 (2001). From the very outset, we have supported and will continue to support the activities of the United States and other countries within the anti-terrorist coalition, and consider the military operations to be inevitable and justified actions.

Our position of principle with respect to terrorism stems from Kyrgyzstan's position at the epicentre of the struggle against international terrorism and against the illegal trafficking in drugs and weapons, which are a threat to the stability and security not only of the Central Asian region but of the entire civilized world. Our country has for three years been defending itself against incursions by terrorist bands that have resulted in the deaths of entirely innocent people. If it had not been for our firm determination to take a stand against terrorism and keep a firm lock on our borders, then serious destabilization of the entire region would have been inevitable. We do not wish to exaggerate our role, but it is we who have prevented the terrorists from

crossing our borders into other countries. I would also like to note that Kyrgyzstan has also made its territory available and the necessary transport vehicles for the transit of international humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan on the Osh-Ishkashim-Faizabad road.

A serious problem for us is that of refugees who have come to the territory of our Republic from the region of the conflict. Kyrgyzstan already hosts approximately 2,000 Afghan refugees. Their numbers could increase very rapidly. All of this is a very serious problem, and finding a solution will require active assistance from the relevant international organizations.

Over the last few years we have all seen Afghanistan become a sanctuary for various international terrorist organizations. After the fall of Kabul yesterday, the inter-Afghan conflict has entered a completely new phase. Moreover, it is now more urgent than ever to deal with the question of a mutually acceptable solution to untie the Afghan knot. Kyrgyzstan proceeds from a deep understanding of the need for rapidly winding up the military confrontation in Afghanistan, with the subsequent formation in that long-suffering country of a broadly representative, multi-ethnic Government, that, first and foremost, meets the interests and aspirations of the Afghan people.

In this connection, Kyrgyzstan welcomes constructive ideas and proposals aimed at establishing a long-awaited peace in Afghanistan. For our part, we consistently express our readiness to cooperate with all the countries involved in order to settle the Afghan conflict. We consider that it is precisely the United Nations, with its experience, capabilities and institutional potential, that should play a key role in bringing together the efforts of the international community to combat terrorism. In this regard, Kyrgyzstan proposes the creation of a special committee of the United Nations to restore peace and stability in Afghanistan, which could be a coordinating body for all the practical measures to this end.

Today we would like to recall one of the well-known initiatives of the President of Kyrgyzstan, Askar Akayev, to hold a forum for dialogue on security questions between the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the Organization of the Islamic Conference. It seems to us that there is now an urgent need for such a dialogue between these two authoritative organizations. In this connection, Kyrgyzstan took the very important initiative to hold on 13-14 December of this year, under the aegis of the OSCE in Bishkek, the capital of Kyrgyzstan, an international conference on enhancing security and stability in Central Asia and strengthening comprehensive efforts to counter terrorism. We are now making active preparations, together with the secretariat of the OSCE, for this important measure. In our view, the participation of the United Nations in that event would facilitate a consolidated solution for working out joint approaches to combating terrorism. This would be an important step in strengthening the international community's capacity to avert the threat to security in Central Asia, including by expanding the assistance to countries in that region in the face of the growing threat. It is encouraging to note that many States, including participants in the anti-terrorist coalition, are showing serious interest in the Bishkek international conference to combat terrorism.

Kyrgyzstan attaches great importance to questions of sustainable development. In this regard, my delegation greatly appreciates the decision of the fifty-fifth session of the General Assembly to hold a World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg, South Africa. It is a pleasure to note that Kyrgyzstan made a very significant contribution to the preparation of the Rio + 10 summit on problems of sustainable development, having organized, together with the United Nations Secretariat, in Bishkek, a regional round table. The results of the round table will certainly be reflected in the key documents of the World Summit in Johannesburg.

As we well know, the United Nations has proclaimed next year the International Year of Mountains. This is certainly a very important and productive initiative on a global level. We, the members of the delegation of Kyrgyz Republic, can indeed be proud that one of the most important initiatives of the International Year of Mountains was taken by our President, Askar Akayev.

It is indeed true that the mountains of the world are a symbol of the lofty ideals of humankind, but mountains also pose related ecological, economic and social problems for the people living in those areas. High mountains should not cause these problems for their inhabitants. I fully agree fully with Mrs. Benita Ferrero-Waldner, the Foreign Minister of Austria, that the International Year of Mountains should be a year

for new initiatives for exchanging experience and drafting new programmes of cooperation.

The acuity of the ecological problems of mountainous areas and their connection to economic problems led our specialists to examine international experience in order to see how to restructure our debts by seeking debt-relief in exchange for ecological initiatives. We feel that this approach provides a unique opportunity for financing national ecological and environmental projects and economic investment programmes. We should also like to express the hope that at the upcoming International Conference on Financing for Development in Mexico, sufficient attention will be given to the specific problems of mountainous countries.

We wish to take this opportunity to welcome the decision of Member States to hold an official opening ceremony for the International Year of Mountains in New York in December of next year. We also note with great satisfaction that in October 2002, the capital of Kyrgyzstan, Bishkek, will welcome representatives from all over the world for the Bishkek Global Mountain Summit. We are already preparing for this very important event, which will take place during the International Year of Mountains. We wish to express our hope that the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Kofi Annan, will be able participate in the Summit.

In conclusion, I should like to express our deep conviction that the efforts of United Nations Member States and the entire world community are aimed at implementing the ideals and principles enshrined in the Millennium Declaration and the United Nations Charter, and that they will lead to the triumph of peace, freedom and democracy.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the State Secretary of the Kyrgyz Republic for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Osmonakun Ibraimov, State Secretary of the Kyrgyz Republic, was escorted from the rostrum.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency The Honourable Lieutenant-General. Mompati S. Merafhe, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Botswana.

Mr. Merafhe (Botswana): Before I deliver my statement, please allow me to express the heartfelt condolences of my delegation to the Governments of the United States of America and the Dominican Republic and to the families of the victims of the tragic air traffic accident in New York on Monday. During this time of grief and sadness, our sympathies are with those who lost their loved ones.

It is with great pleasure that I extend to the President and his country, the Republic of Korea, the warmest congratulations of my delegation on his election to the presidency of the United Nations General Assembly at its fifty-sixth session. We are confident that under his able leadership, we will have a very productive session. The President can rest assured of the full cooperation of the delegation of Botswana in the discharge of the noble task entrusted to him.

I should also like to pay tribute to his predecessor, Mr. Harri Holkeri of Finland. The skilful manner in which he guided our deliberations during the fifty-fifth session of the General Assembly speaks for his wealth of diplomatic experience and diligence in his work.

To our Secretary-General, may I express the full support and confidence of my delegation as he begins a second term of office. We congratulate him for the highly esteemed Nobel Peace Prize for 2001, bestowed jointly on him and the United Nations system. This special award is not only to the Secretary-General, personally, but also to the many dedicated men and women who continue to work tirelessly for the United Nations system.

It is regrettable that even as we are assembled here to forge a common future within the same walls where just 12 months ago our leaders proclaimed the arrival of a brave new world full of hope and promise, our attention should be drawn to acts of international terrorism not far from where we are meeting.

My delegation wishes to add its voice to those of other speakers who have condemned, in the strongest language possible, the bombings that occurred in New York and Washington, resulting in a huge loss of human life. Immediately after learning of these attacks, my Government issued a statement in which we condemned these terrorist attacks and those who conceived and perpetrated them. A unified and concerted effort is required from the international community in order to wipe the scourge of international terrorism from the face of the earth, once and for all.

Among other things, we need to reaffirm our commitment to the full implementation of all conventions on combating terrorism. My delegation is convinced that the international community collectively has the resources necessary to win the war against terrorism. This is a challenge of our age.

The other major challenge that presents extraordinary danger to humanity is the HIV/AIDS pandemic, whose devastating impact on our societies and our economies, particularly in Africa, is well documented.

According to recent estimates, of the 36.1 million people living with HIV globally, 25.3 million are in sub-Saharan Africa. Of the 5.3 million people infected with the virus during 2000, 3.8 million were in sub-Saharan Africa. Of the 3.0 million people who died of HIV/AIDS in 2000, 2.4 million were in sub-Saharan Africa. These statistics present an extremely grim picture of the HIV/AIDS situation in sub-Saharan Africa. As delegates are no doubt aware, my country is one of the worst affected on the continent. Unless we join forces to tackle this pandemic, it will continue to have a devastating impact on our societies and economies. Funding for the HIV/AIDS programmes is grossly inadequate and has to be increased in order to mitigate the impact of the scourge.

Indeed, the twenty-sixth special session of the United Nations General Assembly underscored the imperative of intensified global action to combat the pandemic. The Global HIV/AIDS and Health Fund could not have come at a more opportune time. It is our sincere hope, therefore, that the donor community will respond positively to the financing of the trust fund.

I want to stress the need to strengthen the role of the United Nations in this fight. Our efforts for the prevention and treatment of the disease need to be augmented and strengthened by concrete measures of support and resources from the international community if we are to turn the tide of the spread of HIV/AIDS.

The third issue I wish to highlight is that of "conflict diamonds" versus "development diamonds". Botswana deplores the fact that diamond resources in a number of countries in Africa are being plundered by rebels to purchase weapons that are used to cause enormous suffering to innocent people.

However, I want to underscore the fact that "conflict diamonds" constitute only 4 per cent or less of the world trade in diamonds. Legitimate, conflict-free diamonds, such as those produced in my country, are used to generate socio-economic growth and development. I am glad that the contribution of conflict-free diamonds to the economic growth of countries such as mine, and indeed of other countries in Southern Africa, is being appreciated.

We have been active participants in the Kimberly Process, in which Governments of diamond-producing countries of Southern Africa and other interested Governments, the diamond industry and civil society organizations are working together to institute a certification scheme designed to eliminate that small percentage of conflict diamonds from world trade. We sincerely want to see the suffering inflicted upon the people of Angola, Sierra Leone, the Democratic Republic of Congo and others brought to an end.

Regrettably, many more countries in our continent continue to be torn apart by war and conflict. We applaud the efforts of the United Nations and other international players to enhance the capacity of African countries to prevent conflict and maintain peace and stability in the continent. We are convinced that the determination of many in Africa to consolidate democracy will go a long way towards ensuring that conditions of security and stability are instituted throughout the continent. The establishment of the African Union, which will be launched next year in the Republic of South Africa, is the most positive expression of a new solidarity, based on an urgent search for collective economic security and political partnership. Without underestimating the hurdles we still face as we move our continent towards integration, it is our fervent belief that an era of hope has been ushered in on our continent.

The most talked about undertaking by Africa in recent weeks has been the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), which is aimed at achieving socio-economic development by alleviating poverty as well as promoting peace, security, democracy and good governance. Unlike other initiatives that came before it, the New Partnership for Africa's Development challenges African countries to take primary responsibility for their own development by ushering in a political environment guaranteeing peace, security and stability, respect for human rights, democratic principles and the rule of law.

The initiative underscores the need for a policy framework and, indeed, regulatory structures that will enhance governance in Africa. I must say, all of these are achievable objectives, and we as a continent have unreservedly committed ourselves, our Governments and peoples, and the required resources to their attainment. We also believe that the initiative will usher in a new concept of technical cooperation between Africa and our development partners, and that the United Nations will have a critical role to play in its implementation.

My delegation attaches importance to the International Conference on Financing for Development, scheduled to be held in Mexico in the spring of 2002, and the forthcoming World Summit on Sustainable Development, to be held in South Africa in September 2002. These Conferences will offer us an opportunity to examine issues of development in a holistic and pragmatic manner. Issues of environment, trade, domestic policy-making, international cooperation and partnership with the Bretton Woods institutions, as well as the private sector, will have to feature prominently at these conferences.

Recent developments in Sierra Leone give us hope that peace will now be given a chance in that country. The agreement between the Government and the Revolutionary United Front (RUF), which will see the latter transformed into a political party, is a major achievement and an important step forward. The RUF must now translate its promises into action, because this is the only way that the international community will be able to provide the much needed support for the holding of the envisaged national elections, which will provide the basis for the restoration of peace and stability in Sierra Leone.

There is a real window of opportunity for peace in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. After many years of bloody conflict, which has inflicted immense suffering on the people of the Congo, the political players and other stakeholders have embarked on a national dialogue that should bring peace to the country. I would like to underline the fact that dedication and perseverance will be required on the part of those concerned in order for the inter-Congolese dialogue to be crowned with success. We therefore urge the players to see the process of negotiations through, because the alternative is to slide back down into the suffering and misery that the Congolese have endured for so long. I also wish to call upon the international community to provide the necessary support and resources to the Office of the Facilitator, former President Sir Ketumile Masire, to enable the facilitation process of the inter-Congolese dialogue to succeed.

The peace process in Burundi is moving in the right direction after many years of painful war. The deal brokered by former President Mandela has provided a way out of the stalemate. The resolve of the parties to remain committed to the peace process is the only way forward.

We continue to be concerned that prospects for peace in Angola remain distant. At the heart of the impasse are UNITA's continuing acts of destabilization and sabotage. UNITA must understand that there can be no military solution to the crisis in Angola. We therefore wish to appeal to UNITA to reconsider its position and choose the path of dialogue.

My delegation is seriously concerned at the recent escalation of violence in the Middle East. It is our sincere hope that the Government of Israel and the Palestinian Authority will recognize the urgent need to resume negotiations towards a comprehensive peace agreement. A lasting solution to this problem is essential.

In conclusion, let me reaffirm my country's commitment to the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter. We are committed to working with others to strengthen this Organization in order to surmount the challenges that face us all as nations and peoples across the globe. The United Nations is our only hope for a stable and prosperous world.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Vartan Oskanian, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Armenia.

Mr. Oskanian (Armenia): Let me begin, Sir, by congratulating President Han Seung-soo on his election as President of the fifty-sixth session of the General Assembly. I would like also to express our appreciation of and respect for Mr. Harri Holkeri for the professionalism and dedication with which he conducted the previous session.

Since the acts of terrorism on 11 September, each of us, as individuals and as leaders responsible for the future of our planet, has been trying to understand what happened — why and how. The universal condemnation of the arrogance and fascist mentality

that conceives and implements such terror could not have been more justified. The immediate determination that the perpetrators must be punished and their bases eliminated was necessary and prudent. The awareness that this is a long and complex process remains evident.

Scholars and analysts have attempted to explore and explain that day of terror, its causes and its ramifications. This is a necessary process that, if we are patient, will begin with more questions than answers. Listening will inevitably lead to dialogue, not just this year, but every year. If we are honest, this dialogue will reflect the fact that, although we all see quite plainly that there has been a change, we do not agree on what that change is or how it affects each of us.

There are those who believe that the world has been taken off the path of economic globalization and democratization. There are some who insist that the nature and course of international relations has irrevocably changed — that the world order, as it existed, has come crashing down. That may be the inescapable, though illusory, initial reaction. It may appear that bilateral and multilateral relations have been fundamentally and involuntarily re-tailored.

Yet if this perception becomes more than a natural temporary reaction — if the terrorists succeed in intimidating us, and force us to take actions that are not in our best interests, causing us to abandon principles and agendas — then the terrorists will have succeeded. They will have terrorized their way to setting agendas and determining policies. But just as New Yorkers have vowed continued allegiance to their city and their way of life, the international community, too, must remain true to its structures, traditions and agenda.

That is not to say, however, that life has returned to business as usual, or that it can do so. It certainly cannot return to thinking as usual. Our allied approach to the problems and realities that we collectively face requires genuine, radical rethinking. The deep dissatisfaction, injustice, poverty and hopelessness — which do not justify terror but serve to validate it, legitimize it and guard it — must be addressed and eradicated, too. These deep-problems must be replaced by equality, education, social justice, women's and children's human rights, civil liberties and democracy.

Armenia readily joined the global struggle to eradicate the terrorism network because the success of this effort is as important for us as it is for the coalition leaders. However, Armenia asks that, in our effort and exercise of responsibility, to neutralize this enemy, we be careful about our own definitions and labels. Just as it is crucial to ensure solidarity in the united battle against the evil of terrorism, a divergence of interpretative opinion or varied agendas should not be construed as lack of solidarity.

Just as the coalition leaders are concerned about the effects of terrorism on their countries, peoples, lifestyles and values, Armenia is concerned about how the advent of such terror, and the extended battle against it, will affect our region and our country. The war on terrorism has added a further dimension to our domestic and foreign policy agenda, not narrowed its focus. The economic and political conditions which make ours a volatile region have not gone away. Indeed, they have been exacerbated by the new alliances and priorities. Worse still, they might be further aggravated if they are ignored and allowed to lie latent while all attention is focused on the immediate danger. In focusing on the hatred of thousands, we do not want to dismiss the frustration and needs of millions, many of whom stand at the brink of war.

That is why, even as Armenia has offered unreserved cooperation with the global coalition, signed the United Nations and Council of Europe anti-terrorism conventions, and offered military and strategic assistance, we continue to insist that the fundamental short- and long-term developmental issues facing us also be dealt with. We are worried about the stability of our region, because the basic freedoms which are the hallmarks of modern society and which decrease the likelihood of violent social and political solutions are not universally guaranteed in our neighbourhood.

Security and peace around the world depend on stability in each region. If we are committed to world peace and security, each of us in our own region must take on the responsibility to address the outstanding issues in a new light, guided by new thinking. It remains for the leaders to abandon the expediency of realpolitik for the efficacy of "justpolitik". This is nothing that has not been said before, but perhaps in this new environment of searching, our call will not fall on deaf ears. Our region has the wealth, the traditions,

the opportunities and the links that can make it flourish and thrive.

As far as Armenia's contribution to peace and stability in the Caucasus is concerned, there are two intertwined issues affecting our relations with two of our neighbours. One is the absence of relations with Turkey, to the west; the other is the Nagorny Karabakh conflict, which affects our relations with Azerbaijan.

For the past 10 years, representatives of my Government have, from this podium, affirmed that basic freedoms of thought, belief, conviction, ethics, traditions, values and culture also apply to the men, women and children of Nagorny Karabakh. This lies at the heart of the conflict over Nagorny Karabakh. Azerbaijan's insistence on inventing numbers, redefining terms, creating history and obfuscating discussion are part of the problem, not the search for a solution. In response to the charges made today by my colleague from Azerbaijan with regard to Armenia and Nagorny Karabakh, let me say the following. Nagorny Karabakh has never been a part of independent Azerbaijan. Whether we consider history or geography, whether we adopt a long-term political perspective or face the reality of the facts on the ground, the men, women and children of Nagorny Karabakh have earned the right to live peacefully on their historic lands. For decades they have been denied that right. Today, a dozen years after the re-eruption of the conflict, the children of Karabakh have completed an entire school career free of alien domination and foreign occupation.

Justice for the people of Nagorny Karabakh has been at the core of Armenia's policies and actions, not just because we believe it is right, but also because we believe that, in order to achieve lasting peace, economic cooperation and political development, this conflict will have to be resolved fairly and fully. Azerbaijan's empty calls for a military solution, which arise from an adherence to old clichés rather than from new realities, are not acceptable among neighbours that are serious about peace.

As for our relations with Turkey, in this post-11 September world, when the cold war has truly and finally ended, where erstwhile adversaries have found reasons to put aside ideology and establish partnerships, perhaps Turkey will put aside preconditions in the interests of regional and world peace. Armenia would like to have normal, good-neighbourly relations with Turkey, and is hopeful that Turkey will establish diplomatic relations with Armenia, open the borders and engage in constructive cooperation.

But the obvious must be stated. The memory of the Armenian genocide continues to haunt and obstruct Turkey's relations with Armenia. However, we are confident that this issue can be addressed between the two Governments, through dialogue. The events of the past two months have reminded Armenians that man is indeed capable of immense, indescribable evil and that mass violence is not a thing of the past. Yet if we, as the victims of genocide, are unwilling to permit our own tragic past to define our actions in the future, we can confidently call on Turkey to do the same, and to join us as equal participants in a dialogue between our two peoples.

There is no doubt that the United Nations provides the most overarching and inclusive framework for creating the conditions that make States and peoples prefer peace to war. The United Nations — acting, where possible, with various multilateral and regional organizations — should identify and utilize the comparative advantage and specificity of each institution and each country as a potential fighter, as a potential instrument in the war for peace, and even as a potential victim.

The United Nations did not need 11 September to acknowledge economic development and poverty eradication as strategic battlefields in the war against terrorism. Donor countries can contribute to the success of this war by providing not only military forces, but also greater financial and technical assistance.

Such assistance must be coordinated. The new challenges call for the consolidation of existing mechanisms of international dialogue, cooperation and security. The United Nations can make a major contribution to this process, especially if it reflects, in a more equitable manner, the political and economic realities of today's world. We believe that real reform of the Security Council lies in the expansion of both categories: permanent and non-permanent. We support the desire of Germany and Japan to become permanent members of the Security Council.

Armenia also attaches great significance to the issue of equitable geographic representation, and hence it supports increased representation for underrepresented regions, especially Asia, Africa,

Latin America and the Caribbean. In this regard, Armenia is equally supportive of India's quest for permanent membership in the Security Council. We believe strongly that any increase in non-permanent membership should also ensure enhanced representation for the Group of Eastern European States through the allocation of one additional non-permanent seat.

Modern life has caused upheavals in static societies, and the answer lies not in any particular faith but in healthy, democratic institutions and legislation and viable economic systems.

Writer V. S. Naipaul made that assertion, and this year he was awarded a Nobel Prize, as was Secretary-General Kofi Annan. This choice of recipients provides much food for thought. Neither has been exclusivist; they have both been inclusive, as can be seen in their ability to bring their deep-rooted traditions to bear on the challenges facing our global society. While Naipaul the writer teases and provokes, Annan the diplomat challenges and soothes. They both do so with grace and from positions of strength. They can both afford to be more extreme in their pronouncements, but they are not.

The message here is that in this year of dialogue among civilizations, there are successful ways of merging the best of the world's traditions, even while challenging the world to move forward towards justice and democracy for all. Naipaul and Annan do not reject the failures of the world, but challenge us to address them. We, collectively, could do worse than to follow their example.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I call on His Excellency Mr. Koffi Panou, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of the Republic of Togo.

Mr. Panou (Togo) (*spoke in French*): The sudden speeding up of events that has taken place since the fifty-fifth session of the General Assembly and their potential impact on the future of humankind only confirms our impression that our world is experiencing developments that could, one the one hand, open the door to hopes for peace, stability and progress, or, on the other, jeopardize these hopes and imperil prospects for a better world.

The threat is real. We therefore must mobilize our efforts to an even greater extent to ensure that the ideals of peace, solidarity, justice and tolerance can triumph throughout the world.

Hatred and intolerance took centre stage on 11 September, when the United States, our host country, was the target of terrorist acts of indescribable and unjustifiable barbarity.

In the face of the outrage and horror to which those events gave rise, the President of the Republic of Togo immediately condemned these heinous attacks, which he called a veritable declaration of war, and which, regrettably, caused the death of nationals of nearly 80 countries, including mine.

Once again, in paying tribute to all of those who lost their lives in the tragedy of 11 September and in conveying once again our deep condolences to the American people, I should like to express the fervent hope that, thanks to our collective efforts and to a greater solidarity in our actions, we will be able to defeat evil.

Because we have on several occasions been the victims of terrorist acts, Togo is aware of the significance and seriousness of the consequences of such acts of murderous violence, which are committed with complete disregard for respect for human life and for human dignity.

The joint combat against international terrorism, in all its manifestations and wherever necessary, is a task of great importance for the entire international community, because no one is safe from this scourge. This fight should not be understood as a confrontation between civilizations, cultures or religions. Identifying the true causes of this scourge and finding appropriate solutions to combat it — this is the true challenge that we must meet.

In this context, it is important to do everything we can to ensure the broadest possible participation of States in the strict application of the 12 international conventions dealing with specific aspects of terrorism and to step up negotiations on the comprehensive convention on international terrorism.

Likewise, it is essential for all States to cooperate closely with the mechanism has been set up by the Security Council pursuant to resolution 1373 (2001) in order to combat this scourge in an efficient and coordination manner. My country is already complying with its responsibilities in the context of this process.

However, cooperation in eradicating this scourge needs to be strengthened at the regional level as well. Thus our West African subregion notes with satisfaction that it has set up functional structures to combat terrorism, through the quadripartite agreement between Ghana, Togo, Benin and Nigeria; and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Protocol on Mutual Assistance, Protocol on Non-Aggression and Protocol relating to the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peacekeeping and Security.

Before continuing my statement, I should like to join my voice to those of previous speakers in extending to Mr. Han, on behalf of my delegation and on my own behalf, our warmest congratulations on his election as President of the fifty-sixth session of the General Assembly. I am convinced that, thanks to his experience and diplomatic skills, the work of this session will definitely be successful.

I should like also to extend my warmest congratulations to his illustrious predecessor, Mr. Harri Holkeri, who so ably guided the work of the fifty-fifth session.

Finally, I should like to take this opportunity to pay well-deserved tribute to Mr. Kofi Annan. Thanks to his skill and his vision, our Organization has regained its credibility and its primary role in the management of international affairs. His unanimous re-election to a second term of office, and the fact that he won the Nobel Peace Prize for 2001 together with the United Nations, attest clearly to the great confidence that the entire international community places in him.

There cannot be economic progress nor sustainable development outside an environment of peace, security and stability. Togo's foreign policy has always been based on the principle of seeking peace, stability and solidarity between nations.

Since coming to power, the President of our Republic, Mr. Gnassingbé Eyadema, has worked to consolidate peace. This requires the participation of all citizens in political life as well as the construction of a state that is truly based on the rule of law, in which all individuals can make their contribution and use their skills in the building of a prosperous nation.

The President had already begun to democratize political life in Togo by the 1980s. Like any other human endeavour, the promotion of democracy and good governance and the consolidation of the rule of law are part of a process that, by necessity, can be perfected and can evolve and that fits in a given time and place.

With various forms of support and aid from our foreign partners, this process is taking its course and registering tangible and real progress. We should like here to express our profound thanks to all our international partners who have supported us in our ambition to pursue and achieve political reforms necessary to consolidate democracy and rule of law in Togo.

The upcoming legislative elections, in March 2002, are organized with the aim of making this ambition more of a reality. In this regard, we are grateful to the United Nations for having recently sent an assessment mission to Togo to make recommendations in light of these elections. The long-awaited upcoming legislative elections, as well as the proper conduct of the balloting, will, without a doubt, contribute to boosting the economy of our country.

For it is true that progress made in pursuing any process of democratization and establishing the rule of law can be protected only if accompanied by a significant improvement in the living conditions of the populations concerned. In other words, to be lasting, the advances in promoting civil and political rights and fundamental liberties should absolutely be underpinned by the real enjoyment of economic and social rights.

In such a context, we may well be surprised at the unjustified continuation of the economic sanctions imposed on Togo by our main partners in development for almost 10 years. What has my country done to deserve such a fate? What has the Togolese population done to justify its daily suffering? Why apply this policy of double standards? Given the way Togo is being treated, are we to see this as an concrete illustration of the views of the renowned, classic French writer Jean de la Fontaine: "Depending on whether you are powerful or weak, the judgement of the court will make you white or black"?

The Togolese people still cannot understand why Togo — which was one of the first countries in Africa to be committed to the path of democratization and political reforms and which, in all objectivity, made progress in this area — continues to be subjected to such injustice. I would like to make once again an urgent appeal, on behalf of the Togolese Government

and people, for normalization of our cooperative relations with our development partners.

Peace, security and stability in Africa are still at the heart of our concerns. We note with satisfaction that significant progress in settling conflicts has recently been made on the continent. I would cite by way of example the cessation of conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea, or the gradual return to normal constitutional life in Comores, despite the vicissitudes of the last few days. All this was made possible thanks to the efforts of the Organization of African Unity, the Organization of la Francophonie and the League of Arab States. These are glimmers of hope and signs of relief.

Nonetheless, must remains to be done to bring about lasting peace and security in certain parts of the continent, notably in the Mano River region, the Horn of Africa, the Great Lakes Region and Angola.

The serious crisis endures in the Middle East. Violence can only beget bitterness and resentment and perpetuate violence. The hellish cycle of violence that the region has known for already more than a year — in particular, in the occupied Palestinian territories — has certainly had an impact on the negotiations being pursued with a view to reaching a just, final and comprehensive settlement to the question of Palestine that is at the heart of the conflict.

It is therefore important that the parties in conflict show greater proof of the necessary political will in applying the agreements that have been reached and work to conclude other arrangements on the basis of the relevant Security Council resolutions. In this respect, Togo welcomes the positive developments that have been recently made with respect to the evolution of the position of certain Member States on the creation of a Palestinian State.

Humanity has fully entered the twenty-first century, but the economic and social position of developing countries remains of concern. In sub-Saharan Africa and in the least-developed countries in particular, we are witnessing an ongoing deterioration of living conditions and the unprecedented marginalization of these countries — a situation that can only exacerbate misery and extreme poverty.

Debt burden, the decline in export earnings and the lack of sufficient resources for development have greatly contributed to making social and economic conditions worse. Therefore more resources must be allocated to these areas. In addition to these insurmountable difficulties, we now have the pandemics of AIDS and malaria.

Africa, which is already organizing itself and taking matters in hand, expects the international community to make good on the commitments undertaken at the Millennium Summit. Against this background, we hope that the major encounters that will take place in 2002 — the International Conference on Financing for Development and the World Summit on Sustainable Development — will be opportunities to take appropriate measures that can genuinely contribute to economic growth and poverty reduction. We also hope that specific and substantial support will be given to Africa in implementing its development plan, as contained in the New Partnership for Development in Africa.

At the start of the millennium, with great changes underway in the world, the United Nations still is, without a doubt, the centre for new hopes and expectations of humanity. More than ever before, it has shown itself to be the appropriate framework in which, together, we can and must work to meet the numerous and complex challenges that humanity faces in the context of an increasingly inexorable process of globalization.

While continuing to work to maintain peace and security, promote sustainable economic development and move towards eradicating the great pandemics, we also must confront poverty, injustice, selfishness and exclusion, which, it seems to me, still are the source of many problems that often lead to acts of violence, terrorism and armed conflict. Thus, and only thus, will it be possible for us to establish a new international order of greater justice, solidarity and humanity.

Mr. Gatti (San Marino) (*spoke in Italian; English text provided by the delegation*): On behalf of the Government of the Republic of San Marino, I wish to congratulate Mr. Han Seung-soo on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-sixth session and to thank his predecessor for his valuable contribution.

I would also like to congratulate the Secretary-General, who was recently re-elected for a second term. Over the past five years, my country has greatly appreciated his efficiency, charisma and excellent diplomatic ability.

In expressing its most sincere satisfaction, the Republic of San Marino congratulates the United Nations and its Secretary-General on having been awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in recognition of this Organization's ongoing commitment to peace and irreplaceable role and of its leader's outstanding diplomatic skills and dedication, which have always characterized his fruitful activity.

Quite understandably, these days the General Assembly is debating and wondering how and why the world could change in just a few hours and how the process of civilization of the international community could be so ferociously attacked. We have gathered in the most important international forum to define the role to be played by each country, individually or multilaterally, and to determine how this daunting and insidious challenge can be faced by each and everyone of us. Our discussions should also focus on how to adjust our national legal systems to better support a resolute fight against any form of international terrorism, strengthen our defence systems and promote a common culture of solidarity and firm condemnation of any violation of and attack on human rights and civil co-existence, the respect and safeguard of which are crucial.

However, at a time of enormous difficulties, when the wave of hatred and violence seems to be inexorable, the international community is sending a strong signal of hope by showing its determination not to bend to people who, acting underground, try to spread terror and turmoil by any possible means. Large and small countries alike have joined forces to combat terrorism and have expressed their full solidarity with the United States' outstanding example of democracy and liberty. To the United States and the families of the victims, I wish to express my deepest sympathies and condolences.

Almost all countries have seen the attack on the United States as an attack on each of them. That explains why, in the face of such tragedies, many small nations, too, such as the Republic I represent today, cannot remain neutral by simply offering solidarity or making statements of principles. Each and every one of us is called upon to offer a determined and timely contribution, however small, to the fight against terrorism, which my country has always condemned in all international forums as the main threat to peace.

In this spirit, San Marino immediately expressed its willingness to collaborate with the United States of America and to fully comply with Security Council resolutions, in particular resolutions 1333 (2000) of 19 December 2000 and 1373 (2001) of 28 September 2001. This decision was motivated not only by the fact that our Republic has been a Member of this Organization for almost a decade, but above all by its inherent vocation to promote peace and respect for human rights, prompted by the conviction, matured over 1,700 years of peace and liberty, that any effort in this direction helps to create and maintain international co-existence and mutual respect.

The Republic of San Marino will spare no effort in the global fight against terrorism, as it has already done to prevent and combat money-laundering. To that end, it has adopted the necessary legislative instruments and effective domestic measures and has actively participated in the action carried out in this field by major international organizations, such as the International Monetary Fund, the Council of Europe and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe.

My country has successfully integrated many international provisions aimed at countering terrorism and intends to proceed to the ratification, as soon as possible, of those instruments that are not yet part of its legal system. Indeed, San Marino is well aware of the importance and effectiveness of international law, which has been expressly designed to promote cooperation in this field. In this context, the proposal submitted by India on a comprehensive anti-terrorism convention should be taken into consideration as, today more than ever, this is a very topical issue that deserves our greatest attention.

At the beginning of this new century, mankind cannot and must not move backwards. That would be extremely dangerous, as it would challenge the state of civilization that mankind has worked so strenuously to achieve. All free spirits must do their utmost to avert this potential defeat and embark on the path of solidarity, cooperation and mutual understanding.

I would also like to convey the hope expressed by the Government of San Marino and major institutional bodies for intensified activity by the United Nations, in the conviction that a more active role of the Organization is needed to face the numerous international challenges that, aside from today's

exceptional circumstances, are still at the top of the world political agenda.

On this occasion, I feel duty-bound to congratulate the Secretary-General and the President of the General Assembly for having implemented, with great determination and courage, a major programme of reforms aimed at strengthening the United Nations, well aware of the fact that only a continuous modernization process will enable the Organization to work effectively and to keep abreast of future developments.

In this regard, San Marino has repeatedly stressed the need for a reformed Security Council that, in better reflecting the new world order, would guarantee a higher degree of representativeness, democracy and transparency. We believe that such prerogatives can be ensured by simply increasing the number of non-permanent members. Moreover, San Marino hopes that the right of veto may be gradually restricted with a view to its eventual elimination. Indeed, my country is convinced that the exercise of that right, or the mere threat of its exercise, still represents a major obstacle to the proper functioning of the Organization.

Equally important is the ongoing revitalization process of the General Assembly. The progress that has been achieved in terms of greater efficiency makes us believe that the General Assembly will regain its status as the major decision-making and representative body of the United Nations. My country hopes that the Ad Hoc Working Group, open to all Member States, will carry on this revitalization process.

In consideration of the pivotal role of the United Nations in fostering international peace and security, the Republic of San Marino is of the opinion that this Organization is the most appropriate negotiating forum at the disposal of the community of nations. Besides carefully following the Security Council's efforts to address the latest events, my country has paid great attention to the Council's ongoing commitment to settling the conflicts afflicting Africa. Today more than ever, we believe that the immediate implementation of that body's decisions is crucial to restoring peace in a geographical area already stricken by poverty, epidemics and underdevelopment.

San Marino is also seriously concerned about the escalation of violence and the increased hostilities in the Middle East and hopes that, in that tormented and contested land, dialogue and negotiations can be resumed as the sine qua non of a longed-for world reconciliation.

Against today's international backdrop, the phenomenon of globalization also deserves careful consideration. I am not referring exclusively to its economic and commercial implications, though these are its most tangible components.

Market expansion and the progressive abolition of customs barriers have unquestionably contributed to exporting job opportunities and, eventually, to economic well-being. On the other hand, however, the gap between the living conditions and standards of the North and the South, of the industrialized countries vis-à-vis the developing and least developed ones, which are also burdened by huge foreign debt, has widened dramatically. That gap must be immediately bridged in order to guarantee the globalization of opportunities along with the globalization of markets.

We have all witnessed the anti-globalization demonstrations in Seattle, Prague and, more recently, Genoa. Paradoxically, both the participants in the summits and the demonstrators were striving for the same objectives: poverty eradication, foreign debt relief for developing countries and greater environmental protection. I believe that the existence of common objectives is a first step in the direction of an open and constructive exchange of views.

The Republic of San Marino also maintains that poverty alleviation is one of the major challenges facing the international community for the immediate future. Future projects should address not only the lack of access to consumer goods, but also the lack of education, liberty and participation in decision-making. In this broader context, poverty is an insurmountable obstacle to the full enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Recently published data dramatically show that more than 1.5 billion people live on less than $2 per day, and at least two thirds are illiterate; 830 million people suffer from severe malnutrition, and 750 million are homeless, without access to health care. Moreover, how can we ignore the fact that hundreds of millions of children are suffering from malnutrition, that 30,000 children under five years of age are dying every day and that more than 500 million of them live on less than $1 per day?

Well aware of the dramatic situation of many developing countries, the Republic of San Marino has fully supported the initiatives sponsored by creditor countries and international financial institutions to reduce or cancel foreign debts of highly indebted nations. Though not sufficient to mitigate the problem of poverty or to stop the vicious cycle of misery, these initiatives reflect the will of both creditor and debtor countries to find jointly a solution for the scourge of poverty and to share responsibilities.

It is not utopian to think that, by addressing and solving the problems of hunger, poverty and the disproportionate social, economic and cultural gaps between a minority living in the North and an overwhelming, poor and despairing majority living in the South, terrorism will also be wiped out in the near future. Indeed, poverty and ideological extremism serve as fertile soil for terrorism, with its destructive potential and toll in human lives.

Once again, the Holy Father has rightly called on all States and peoples to struggle for justice, since this is the only way to affirm the pre-eminence of law for the international community. Throughout its long and glorious history of freedom, San Marino has always fully shared this ideal.

Prompted by these sentiments and determined to further support progressive international détente, for the benefit of both nations and individuals, I reiterate the hope of the Republic of San Marino that the international community, through the recognized ability of the United Nations system, will be able to give new impetus to the principles of dialogue and cooperation upon which it is based.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Win Aung, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Myanmar.

Mr. Aung (Myanmar): On behalf of the delegation of the Union of Myanmar, I wish to extend our warmest congratulations to Mr. Han Seung-soo on his well-deserved election to the presidency of the fifty-sixth session of the General Assembly. His election to this high office reflects the trust and confidence of all the Member States in his diplomatic skills and leadership qualities and in his ability to guide our deliberations to successful conclusions. It is also a tribute to his country, the Republic of Korea, which is at the forefront in our common efforts to achieve the goals of the Organization. In the discharge of his heavy responsibilities, may I assure him of our full support and cooperation.

I also wish to express our deep appreciation to his predecessor, Mr. Harri Holkeri of Finland, for his able leadership and valuable contribution during the fifty-fifth session of the General Assembly.

May I also take this opportunity to congratulate our Secretary-General on his re-election to lead the Organization for a second term. I also wish to pay tribute to him for his tireless efforts and far-sighted initiatives to strengthen the United Nations. The award of the Nobel Peace Prize to our Secretary-General and to the Organization is well-deserved recognition in this regard.

The international community was greatly shocked by the recent horrendous terrorist attacks in the United States of America. We are profoundly saddened by the enormous loss of lives and property. We join the international community in extending our deep condolences to the people of the United States in general and the bereaved families in particular. Wherever and by whomever committed, terrorism in any form or under any circumstances is unjustifiable. As a nation that has had bitter experiences with terrorism, both on its own soil and against its aircraft and diplomatic service abroad, Myanmar is against terrorism in all forms and manifestations.

The challenges of combating terrorism are both difficult and complex. Therefore, it is essential that the international community come together under the aegis of the United Nations to overcome the enormous challenge.

In this regard, I commend the Secretary-General for organizing a treaty event at United Nations Headquarters from 10 to 16 November 2001. Myanmar is already a party to 4 of the 12 conventions on terrorism, and on 12 November we signed the International Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism and acceded to the International Convention for the Suppression of Terrorist Bombings.

In the aftermath of the economic crisis of 1997, Asian countries are still striving to return to a path of sustained growth. However, the current slowdown in the major economies of the world is threatening to negate whatever progress they have made. As these economies continue with structural reforms to sustain their economic recovery, they are confronted with an

international economic and trading environment that is not very encouraging.

This situation is creating difficulties, especially for many developing countries and economies in transition. Commodity prices are declining due to weakening world demand. External financing conditions are also worsening. Factors such as indebtedness, declining official development assistance and low levels of domestic and foreign investment continue to undermine the programmes of the most vulnerable States. It is against this unfavourable backdrop that Myanmar is striving to achieve economic development of the country.

There are also hindrances to our efforts to promote the well-being of our people, such as denial of official development assistance and the application of unilateral and coercive economic measures. However, we are resolute in our efforts to achieve our goals by relying on our domestic resources and internal strength and by putting our comparative advantages to optimum use. Our sustained national efforts for development have resulted in 8.4 per cent average annual growth during the last five-year plan, resulting in a substantial increase in per capita income and in better living standards for the people.

In their respective endeavours to bring about economic development and social progress, the developing countries continue to face formidable challenges. The debt burden, the declining flow of official development assistance, the lack of market access and access to technology, and the decline in foreign direct investment continue to persist. The United Nations must play a central role in helping those countries to help themselves.

In this regard, we recognize the important role of United Nations funds and programmes in international cooperation for development. However, their important role should not be undermined by practices that are not in conformity with the principles underpinning the operation of those funds and programmes. Moreover, they should not be used as a platform for exerting pressure on a country that needs and deserves international cooperation in its development efforts.

While acknowledging the role of various funds and programmes, we are particularly appreciative of the important role of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). In United Nations operational activities for development, UNDP serves as the principal instrument for capacity-building in developing countries. Myanmar regrets, however, that the United Nations Development Programme is not allowed to have a country programme for Myanmar. While UNDP continues its useful activities in Myanmar, it is, however, prohibited from promoting capacity-building for reasons other than those for which UNDP was created.

In the present context of an extremely difficult economic and trading environment, the denial of the right of development to a country in need of international cooperation is a matter that deserves appropriate redress.

The HIV/AIDS pandemic poses a serious challenge to the international community. The response of the international community and the efforts being made at the national, regional and international levels to counter this global threat are very encouraging. However, the real challenge for us is the high level of resources needed to combat this disease effectively. It is therefore most welcome that a global AIDS and health fund has been established. With the determination and will that has been demonstrated in current efforts, and strengthened with adequate resources, we are convinced that we will eventually win this war on HIV/AIDS. Myanmar fully recognizes the nature and gravity of the HIV/AIDS problem, is taking the necessary actions at the national level and is enhancing our cooperation at the regional and international levels.

Let me take this opportunity to apprise the Assembly of the political situation in our country. As the Assembly is aware, Myanmar is in the process of establishing a multiparty democracy with a sound economy. All of the measures that we have taken are directed towards that end in a focused manner. This is the course of action which we will pursue steadfastly to its logical end - that is, until democracy is firmly established. We have learned from bitter experience, as well as from the lessons of other countries with similar experiences, and we are taking great care to ensure that the transition to a new system is peaceful, smooth and effective and that the foundations we are striving to lay are placed on firm ground.

We have also been taking effective measures for national reconciliation. We have reached arrangements with 17 out of 18 armed groups, who are now joining hands with the Government in national development

endeavours. In the same vein, we are also making national reconciliation efforts with the political parties. Here, let me stress what the Secretary-General has so rightly outlined in his report. Our national reconciliation efforts are home-grown, and our goal of building a peaceful and democratic society can be successfully achieved only by the people of Myanmar.

Myanmar continues to make relentless efforts to combat the scourge of narcotic drugs. We have made considerable headway in the suppression of opium and heroin. The latest figures show that opium production has declined by 38 per cent. To achieve this, we tackled the problem in a holistic manner. We have strengthened our legislation; we have enhanced our enforcement capacity; and we have combined these measures with a development programme to find alternative livelihoods for people in remote areas, so that they do not have to resort to growing opium.

While we are taking effective measures against the cultivation, production and trafficking of the opium poppy, we are also taking action against the danger of amphetamine-type stimulants, which are relatively new but equally dangerous narcotic drugs. Due to their availability and affordable price, the widespread use of these stimulants among young people has led to an alarming situation in our subregion. This situation calls for renewed efforts at the national level and for stepped-up cooperation at the subregional level.

To enhance cooperation at the regional level, ministers from Myanmar, China, Thailand and Laos met in Beijing in August and agreed to cooperate closely to fight the problem. Our efforts have achieved tangible results: the seizure of drugs and the arrest of the traffickers involved.

Myanmar fully understands how important and urgent it is to combat this scourge afflicting mankind. We have made a firm commitment at the highest political level and are determined to translate these commitments into practical and effective measures within the set time-frame.

I wish to inform the Assembly that we have also enhanced our cooperation with the United Nations system. We continue our cooperation with Mr. Razali Ismail, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General, who completed his fifth visit to the country in August. Another visit towards the end of this year has also been agreed to. Mr. Paulo Sergio Pinheiro, Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights, visited the country twice earlier this year.

Determined to resolve the issue of forced labour, Myanmar is fully cooperating with the International Labour Organization (ILO). In September 2001, an ILO high-level team paid a three-week visit to Myanmar to objectively assess the practical implementation and actual impact of the legislative, executive and administrative measures adopted by the Government to eliminate the practice of forced labour. The Government extended its full cooperation to the team in arranging its meetings in Myanmar and its fact-finding trips to various parts of the country identified by it. What was most important, we gave the team unfettered freedom and unlimited access to carry out its mandate successfully.

Let me now make a few observations concerning the work of the Organization. Last year, our heads of State and Government and leaders gathered in the General Assembly Hall and charted a road-map to guide our future actions. All our work and energy must be directed towards effectively using that road-map to achieve a peaceful and developed world. Peace and the development of nations are the twin objectives of our Organization. While globalization has, to a considerable degree, reduced our planet to the village level, the issues we face in achieving peace and development are global in scale and complexity. As we are acutely aware, no one country is capable of resolving those issues on its own. It is only through concerted efforts and genuine partnerships that we will be able to address those issues of a global scale.

We believe that as the only universal forum with the most comprehensive mandate, the United Nations must play a central role and coordinate our actions in those efforts. At the same time, the United Nations must be further strengthened and vitalized to be able to carry out its global mission effectively and expeditiously. That will require the further strengthening of its organs and institutions. For our part, we must provide the Organization with the resources and the level of support needed to implement its mandate. It is also vitally important to give real effect to our pledges through concrete actions if our Organization is to be successful in building a world of peace and development.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Kolawolé A. Idji,

Minister for Foreign Affairs and African Integration of the Republic of Benin.

Mr. Idji (Benin) (*spoke in French*): I would first of all like to express my outrage at the unacceptable conditions that terrorism has imposed on us at the fifty-sixth session of the General Assembly of our Organization. New York has traditionally been a welcoming and cosmopolitan city. But now, during the Assembly's fifty-sixth session, it and our Organization have been forced to take on the appearance of a besieged fortress.

No one knows what the terrorists have planned, nor who their next victims will be. We are all on the same side in the face of their diabolical enterprise — on the side of this battered city; on the side of the American people and their Government; and on the side of all the innocent victims brought down so cruelly and coldly in Pennsylvania, Washington and New York on that tragic day of 11 September 2001. We reiterate our profound condolences and sympathy to all the bereaved families and to their countries and Governments. At the same time, we reaffirm our unreserved condemnation of terrorism. Terrorism violates the principles of all religions. It blemishes all the causes on whose behalf it claims to act, even the most just among them. It is for that reason that it must be combated by all of us without reservation.

The worldwide awakening aroused by the tragic events of 11 September 2001 must cause us all — great and small, rich or poor — to join in an extraordinary effort to fight those who have decided to sacrifice us without having ever consulted us about either their objectives or war tactics. But it should also be said that as wholly repugnant as terrorist practices are, they cannot be eradicated definitively unless the fertile soil that feeds the situations that serve as their pretexts is removed. The strict respect for human rights and the rights of peoples that are so rightly enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations should today guide our political practices more than ever before. It is urgent for the United Nations to take its proper place in international relations and for it to play the role incumbent upon it. In that regard, the reform of the Security Council is an urgent and imperative necessity.

Poverty, injustice, exclusion and marginalization always result in creating total despair, thereby causing extremism to flourish. And we know how easily extremists sacrifice their own lives and those of others. It is the duty of all of us, and particularly of the most powerful among us, to provide the necessary support to eradicate poverty, marginalization, exclusion and injustice, and to bear that in mind at all times in the just, legitimate and resolute struggle against all forms of terrorism.

The current tragic events that I have just recalled heighten our concerns and give greater weight to the responsibilities of the President of the General Assembly. But his personal talents and experience in world affairs bolster our conviction that he will successfully steer the ship of our Organization into port in these particularly difficult circumstances. For some years now, his country and mine have enjoyed friendly and fruitful relations. He can count on the cooperation and support of the delegation of Benin in the execution of his noble mission.

I would also like to pay well-deserved tribute to Mr. Harri Holkeri of Finland, who guided the United Nations into the new millennium with great spirit. He presided over the Millennium Assembly with competence and discipline, and we extend to him our congratulations and gratitude.

My congratulations go also to my brother, Mr. Kofi Annan, on his well-deserved re-election to the post of Secretary-General of the United Nations and on the Nobel Peace Prize for 2001, awarded to him and the Organization he leads with such competence and dedication. The United Nations has gained a great deal of credibility thanks in particular to the efforts of Mr. Kofi Annan and his team in the Secretariat. Never has there been a more well-deserved prize, and we take pride in it. Indeed, it is all of Africa that is honoured. On behalf of the Benin delegation and myself, I would like to repeat our warm congratulations and encouragement.

Let me take this opportunity to address the international community and each Member of the Assembly to convey the thanks of my country for their massive participation at the Fourth International Conference of New or Restored Democracies, held in Cotonou from 4 to 6 December 2000. Indeed, the Cotonou Conference saw record attendance, with 106 States, 20 international organizations and 51 non-governmental organizations represented, not to mention academics and other researchers interested in discovering Benin's experience of democracy. Benin was honoured by the effective participation of three

heads of State. The Secretary-General of the United Nations and the Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme made a point of attending personally in Cotonou. We welcome this gracious and generous gesture on their part, and express our gratitude to all bilateral and multilateral partners, those from the new or restored democracies as well as those from the older democracies who contributed to financing this Conference.

To judge by its title, "Peace, Security, Democracy and Development", the Cotonou Conference was an important stage in the progress of our century towards a consolidation and expansion of democracy. It marked a remarkable advance by its future-oriented approach and the importance of the document that crowned its work, entitled "Cotonou Declaration". This Declaration lays out brave and bold measures designed to build democracy and allow to it survive in peace, security and respect for diverse cultures. There can be no democracy unless it is adapted to the soil in which it is planted, even if the values of democracy are universal.

The Cotonou Conference was also an opportunity to appreciate how genuine the march towards democracy in Africa is. All peoples want liberty, but the institutional and financial capacity to establish it is weak in many cases, particularly in developing countries. That is why my country hopes for more substantial assistance for the strengthening of the institutional capacities of our countries, because democracy can function only if the leaders and their peoples feel they are equal stakeholders. It is also essential that within the United Nations system, the structure recommended by the Cotonou Conference, while following up the International Conference for New or Restored Democracies, be established with a view to increasing coordination among the different initiatives and activities undertaken or contemplated by the agencies, programmes and various institutions of the United Nations system.

Indeed, the Fourth International Conference of New or Restored Democracies strove to highlight the link that exists between democracy and development. The Conference clearly indicated that if democracy is a force for stability, poverty is a major factor for destabilization and a source of conflicts and war. The decisions of the Fourth International Conference of New or Restored Democracies should not be allowed to remain dead letters. We must organize cooperation and solidarity among all the democracies of the world.

In the course of the Millennium Summit, which took place in this very Hall from 6 to 8 September 2000, major decisions were taken. Among them, pride of place belonged to those relating to questions of development, the elimination of poverty and the particular needs of the least advanced countries. The Millennium Declaration provides, in paragraph 15 of chapter III:

> "We also undertake to address the special needs of the least developed countries. In this context, we welcome the Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries to be held in May 2001 and will endeavour to ensure its success." (*resolution 55/2, para. 15*)

That Conference was held in Brussels from 14 to 20 May 2001 and produced a Programme of Action that was the fruit of very arduous negotiation. However, questions remain. Will the poor countries someday know prosperity? Will they someday be able to satisfy their basic needs? How will they finance their development? Public development assistance is in decline. Investment in poor countries remains weak, and the burden of debt is becoming heavier. What is to be done?

With regard to the question of debt, we think particularly bold solutions are required. For the creditor countries, it must be recognized these solutions are neither simple nor easy. Some of these countries have already adopted exemplary and bold measures; others must follow suit. At stake are their own interests: at stake is the interest of world peace.

This demand represents to us the symbol of solidarity and shared responsibility. That is why the Benin delegation recommends the urgent establishment of an effective and highly visible follow-up mechanism of the Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries.

In the context of the search for peace and the promotion of international cooperation, many disarmament organizations and other related bodies were created to reaffirm that questions of peace and security and questions of development were interdependent and inseparable. The creation of the Zone of Peace and Cooperation of the South Atlantic meets this need. Its goal is to protect the coastal States of the southern part of the Atlantic Ocean from the dangers of nuclear weapons and to create there a zone

of peace and strengthening of cooperation for development.

Since the third ministerial meeting, held in Brasilia, my country had offered to host the sixth meeting, scheduled for the year 2000, but because of the organization of the Fourth International Conference of New or Restored Democracies, this meeting could not take place. My country is looking forward to the early meeting of this sixth meeting. That is why I would like to announce here Benin's offer to organize the sixth ministerial meeting of the States of the Zone of Peace and Cooperation of the South Atlantic in the second half of 2003.

A particularly important instrument of South-South cooperation, the Zone of Peace and Cooperation of the South Atlantic should lay the foundations in Cotonou for its effective and regular functioning within the new context of international relations. All of you here are welcome to Benin, a marketplace and meeting place, a land of democracy and peace.

It is more urgent than ever to establish such peace in the Middle East by recognizing as a matter of urgency on the part of us all the imperative necessity of the Palestinian State — side by side, of course, with the State of Israel — in peace with all its neighbours within secure and recognized frontiers. This is the same peace that Angola and all Africa long for.

Mr. Gounaris (Greece), Vice-President, took the Chair.

We must ban all forms of the illicit traffic in petroleum, diamonds and weapons. These types of illegal traffic cause and sustain wars, and the traffickers are genuine terrorists.

From 31 August to 8 September 2001, the Republic of South Africa hosted in Durban the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance. That great international forum, held under the auspices of the United Nations, brought to light the desire for rehabilitation, justice and fulfilment of the obligations of memory and acknowledgement, which humanity's recent history has left in the subconscious of certain peoples. The difficult debates on the thorny questions raised during the Conference reflect the extent of the difficulties in this undertaking that we all fervently called for.

A collective spirit of openness, the impressive abilities of the host country, the Republic of South Africa, and particularly the receptiveness and ability of my sister, Ms. Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, enabled us to reach agreement on two encouraging documents: the final Programme of Action and the final Declaration. In our view, these documents represent the international community's renewed commitment to fighting and eradicating the seeds of racism and racial discrimination. The foundation has been laid. Now, action must follow to make the two Durban documents a reality of everyday life. This does not mean reopening old wounds; rather, we must all now attend to healing the wounds of the past.

The tragic events whose effects we are still living through obliged us to postpone the General Assembly's special session in follow-up to the World Summit for Children. My country hopes that a new date can be decided on during this session so that we can assess the situation of children in the world 10 years after the World Summit, because much remains to be done to improve the lot of children.

Allow me to recall that Benin, having ratified on 3 August 1990 the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, is among the first 22 States of the world consenting to be legally bound by this instrument. Benin has also ratified the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child. Articles 12, 13 and 26 of Benin's Constitution guarantee the right to education and the protection of families, mothers and children. Benin's intentions in this area are also apparent in the creation of a Ministry of the Family, Social Protection and Solidarity, which will be devoted essentially to the implementation of a cohesive and aggressive policy to protect the family, particularly children.

Encouraging results have been achieved at the national level, but much remains to be done. We are doing admirable work in this area in partnership with the United Nations Children's Fund, the United Nations Development Programme and several estimable non-governmental organizations, such as Terre des Hommes, and several other partners of good will. Those who know Benin can testify to this.

These collaborative efforts have not stopped certain misinformed or ill-intentioned circles in search of scandals from using the Etireno affair to deceive people into believing that the enslavement and selling

of children take place in Benin. But neither malicious intentions nor misinformation nor this sort of intellectual terrorism will prevent us from making progress in terms of democracy, the protection of women and the protection of children from the abuse they still suffer in all the countries of the world, particularly in poor, underdeveloped countries.

The Millennium Declaration gave special attention to Africa under the heading "Meeting the special needs of Africa". One year later, the countries of Africa are still waiting for action to begin to be taken on those promises. However, Africans are no longer willing to wait and have taken their fate into their own hands by creating the New Partnership for Africa's Development. The partnership is a consequence of the newly restored confidence of Africans in their own abilities. It is aimed at placing the historic initiative in the hands of Africans themselves, without in any way renouncing international cooperation. An important step has thus been taken with this new African joint initiative.

Africans finally have hope that their continent will cease to be the continent of disease, poverty, misery and bloody conflicts and that a real partnership can be created between us and the rest of the world. It is our wish that this hope will become reality.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency The Honourable Timothy Harris, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Education of Saint Kitts and Nevis.

Mr. Harris (Saint Kitts and Nevis): It gives me great pleasure to convey to Mr. Han Seung-soo heartfelt congratulations, on behalf of my delegation and the Government of Saint Kitts and Nevis, on his accession to the honourable post of President of the fifty-sixth session of the General Assembly.

I would also like to congratulate his predecessor on a job well done, especially during such an exhausting period for the United Nations. The success of the United Nations is built on the hard work of its Members, and both the President and his predecessor have shown dedication to the positive functioning of this esteemed institution.

In the last decade, world leaders have been working tirelessly in different forums to redefine and address the myriad challenges that characterize the so-called new order. This has placed a great premium on the United Nations, which has provided an able platform for exchanges of ideas, practical dialogue and conflict resolution. My delegation is satisfied that marked progress has been made in identifying many of the critical issues. The United Nations deserves high praise, and we commend Member States for their willingness to use the diplomatic and political resources of the Organization in the conduct of their international relations.

The involvement of the United Nations in recent times is a fitting backdrop for the decision that the coming year will be designated the Year of Dialogue among Civilizations. This is most timely, and it serves as a revalidation of our belief that dialogue is a critical ingredient in promoting partnership and improved understanding among Governments and peoples.

Dialogue is the foundation of solid democracies, strong people-centred institutions, civil societies and sustainable human development. Dialogue is still that very important catalyst which often staves off war and conflict, enabling consensus and confidence-building in an atmosphere of mutual respect and trust. Thus, it is quite obvious why the Government of Saint Kitts and Nevis supports this idea.

In a certain sense, a new world order dawned on 11 September 2001, when terrorism, in a most outrageous form, reared its ugly head in the cities of Washington and New York, in the United States of America, with the loss of thousands of innocent lives. Dialogue among members of the international community rapidly spawned an anti-terrorism coalition of countries, thereby defining the protagonists in this unfolding new order. My country stands solidly with this coalition, especially in pursuing the generally agreed strategies to contain terrorism. Despite the horrendous act of 11 September and subsequent bioterrorism, life goes on, adjusted to a new reality.

Another opportunity where dialogue may prove useful in advancing human security will come when Governments meet at the International Conference on Financing for Development in Monterrey, Mexico next year. Saint Kitts and Nevis regards this as an important occasion to promote the interests of all nations. But, we are especially hopeful that this Conference will embrace the aspirations and promote better appreciation for the needs, vulnerabilities and special circumstances of small economies in small island developing States.

My Prime Minister has repeatedly urged the international community to take a more unbiased look at the peculiar situation of small, vulnerable economies. This is not an appeal for international charity, but a signal to promote the kind of realism through which a Marshall Plan of commitment can be devised to energize small, vulnerable economies so that they can effectively participate in a globalized economy.

Dialogue is important in building real participatory democracies. But democracy among nations is as crucial as democracy within nations. When the people we serve feel that our actions as leaders do not reflect their dreams, goals and aspirations, they may use their democratic right to effect change. We have a duty, therefore, to give loud voices to their silent legitimate hopes. We must place added value on the hopes and expectations of our people in order to legitimize the concepts of representative democracy.

It is within this context that I urge this body to redouble its efforts in finding a solution to the unfortunate stalemate that beleaguers relations between the Chinese people across the Taiwan Straits. My Government remains convinced that both sides of the Taiwan Straits should become fully engaged in this peaceful and non-coercive process without the distraction of preconditions. It would lead to the successful resolution of what appears to be a very contentious issue. At the same time, we encourage the United Nations to be vigilant and ready to assist where possible or when required. Prior to the peaceful settlement of their dispute, it is imperative that we establish a mechanism by which the international community can benefit more appropriately from the proven expertise, technical know-how and skills of the 23 million people of the Republic of China on Taiwan.

We call on the United Nations to assist in the resolution of the question of full inclusion of Cuba into the affairs of the western hemisphere. Also, we urge the people of Cuba, as we celebrate the Year of Dialogue among Civilizations, to embrace the challenge of ensuring that they can participate fully in the community of nations.

Participatory democracy among nations must be erected on the twin pillars of mutual respect and trust. But trust wanes in the face of unilateral actions such as threats made by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries to blacklist and impose sanctions on sovereign Caribbean Governments, consequent upon the OECD countries' misunderstanding of fiscal initiatives taken by sovereign Caribbean Governments as a way to underpin sustainable economic development.

As we celebrate the Year of Dialogue among Civilizations, we urge Member States to resist the lure of national paternalism and unilateral action as a means of problem-solving. In a matter so crucial to the economic future of Caribbean countries, it is inconceivable that conclusions could have been reached and decisions arrived at without the courtesy of dialogue with the very countries against whom such scathing indictments had been made. However, most recently, wiser counsel has prevailed and, in a spirit of dialogue and partnership, significant progress has been made by means of a compromise agreement. The Caribbean Community hails this agreement on offshore fiscal initiatives as a step in the right direction. Such is the power of dialogue among civilizations.

We imagine that the mechanisms of globalization, if timely and equitably applied, can be productive, inclusive, and improve lives. It must be emphasized that, although small States may justifiably harbour some apprehension about globalization, we do not oppose it. On the contrary, we welcome the opportunities to empower our citizens so that they may compete successfully in a global marketplace, mindful that empowerment and the ability to compete successfully, however, require appropriate skill-sets, academic resources and material tools. In order for small States to benefit fully from the new economic order, the global agenda must become a humane agenda, sufficiently responsive to facilitate equitable and affordable access to modern technology — that is to say, technology that is appropriate and responsive to the basic needs of poor communities and small States.

Without realism and a holistic approach in examining the social and economic conditions within small States, there is a potential for serious dislocation when these States attempt to operate within the global marketplace. As responsible Member States, we have a genuine obligation to work towards improving the lives of the disenfranchised. This, I am sure, is the main reason we are here today. Therefore, we must continue to right this important chapter in the development of human security. We must also remain cognizant that, as members of the global village, we have to discard old

suspicions and embrace new partnerships, dialogue and diversity as necessary components of our interdependence.

Partnership and understanding will prove essential in our efforts to tackle common problems such as drug trafficking and the pandemic of HIV/AIDS. The special session on HIV/AIDS came at an important juncture, and we urge Member States to support the decisions that were taken. In small States, like Saint Kitts and Nevis, the pandemic of HIV/AIDS presents one of the most devastating challenges to the development of human security, because such a disease threatens to unravel the delicately woven balance of social growth and economic potential.

Our people are at great risk, and the prospect of losing decades of development and talented people to this illness is amazingly real. On top of losing their young and most productive people, Governments are expected in turn to reallocate significant amounts of already meagre resources from critical development programs to provide costly care and treatment. We salute the United States Government, the World Bank, and others for their recent and important initiatives to help fight the HIV/AIDS pandemic in the Caribbean and we urge others to adopt similar initiatives.

We see what an important role dialogue is playing in the hemispheric approach at the Organization of American States (OAS) through the Multilateral Evaluation Mechanism. This allows member Governments to collaborate in the fight against drug trafficking, in supply and demand initiatives and in the implementation of national or shared strategies. We believe this approach is useful, because it makes common approaches more frequent, discourages unilateral actions and allows member States to share experiences on interdiction, the epidemiology of drug abuse and other trends. The fight against drug trafficking, you will agree, is a transnational one. We cannot point fingers or apportion blame. We need to take action.

Saint Kitts and Nevis welcomes the approach of the OAS, which permits us in the Caribbean to work in a multilateral framework to find common solutions. Equally, such a mechanism focuses attention on the root problems and encourages hemispheric partnership. We hope that these kinds of approaches will become integral components of problem solving at the United Nations.

In closing, the past year was particularly eventful. We began with the Millennium Summit and concluded with the HIV/AIDS special session. In between, we interacted on many contentious issues. It is my hope that during the new year we can move forward with renewed vigour, building on the hard work that our predecessors left in our charge, and paving the way for a brighter future for those to whom we will pass the baton. Once again, we salute the President on behalf of the people of Saint Kitts and Nevis.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Monie Captan, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Liberia.

Mr. Captan (Liberia): I am honoured to participate in this historic session on behalf of His Excellency Dr. Charles Ghankay Taylor, President of the Republic of Liberia, and to share with the Assembly his contribution to this debate.

I am pleased to congratulate the President on his on your election as President of the fifty-sixth General Assembly. We wish to assure His Excellency of the full cooperation of the Liberian delegation.

May I also take this opportunity to acknowledge the outgoing President, Mr. Harri Holkeri of Finland, for the very able manner in which he conducted the fifty-fifth session of the General Assembly.

By the same token, I would like to congratulate our distinguished Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, on his re-election as Secretary-General and for the distinguished recognition he received in being awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, which, without a doubt, is a result of his vision, commitment and the efficient manner in which he has led and continues to lead our organization.

On 11 September 2001, not very far from this place, which is dedicated to the maintenance of international peace and security, the world was confronted with a kind of terrorism that now renders all of us vulnerable. This terrorism is not confined to any one group of people, nor is it confined to any one geographical location, or to any particular ethnic or religious group. Because of its transnational nature, the world must come together and, in a coordinated and collective manner, construct new models in answer to this scourge. We must act without delay, and without unnecessary debate. We must act with determination and urgency.

The problem of terrorism today requires that our Organization, the United Nations, should take the lead in coordinating and consolidating international efforts to tackle the new challenges that it raises. The United Nations should serve as a catalyst for these efforts, and not another bureaucratic web of inaction and prolonged debate. The United Nations — the institution that humanity has charged with the responsibility for global peace and security — is today the subject of terrorist threats. We must match our words with deeds; we must respond to this scourge.

My Government reiterates its condemnation, in the strongest terms, of the barbaric and heinous acts of terrorism perpetrated against the United States, leading to unimaginable and enormous loss of lives and massive destruction in New York, Washington, D.C., and Pennsylvania. My Government has made concrete offers to the United States Government and the international coalition, and has taken strong measures in keeping with Security Council resolution 1373 (2001).

I wish now to proceed to issue of reform of the United Nations. I believe, like the rest of you, that reform implies change towards a more positive condition. And I presume that when we speak of the United Nations, we speak of nations that have come together with a common interest to achieve a common objective. In essence, when we speak of reform, we must accept that the conditions under which our nations have come together — with a common interest to achieve a common objective — are no longer palatable and require change. The questions that many of us continue to debate regard what changes we want, and how to achieve those changes.

However, I must interject a fundamental question as to whether the conditions, practices and traditions exist for a positive change, assuming we mean positive for the collective good. In bringing about any positive change for the collective good, a level playing field must exist, in which the interest of the whole will freely manifest itself in the change. A level playing field should show the following characteristics: transparency; freedom; fairness; and democratic practices.

In terms of transparency, we must assume a condition in which the operation of and decision-making process within the United Nations and its specialized agencies are open. The Security Council should not deliberate in secrecy, as was the case during the pre-World War II years, in which secret diplomacy and alliance formations characterized the period.

Mr. Papandreou (Greece), Vice-President, took the Chair.

In terms of freedom, we must assume that Members of the United Nations can take decisions in the absence of threats, coercion, fear and retribution.

In terms of fairness, we must assume that decisions cannot be taken in contradiction to universal moral imperatives, or to the detriment of the statehood of a Member. Sanctions with adverse socio-economic and humanitarian consequences should not constitute political tools available to a few Members.

In terms of democratic practices, we must assume that decision-making will be reflective of the will of the majority and not of a few; that all Members will have an equal say and equal participation.

Unfortunately, the contrary of these preconditions constitutes the status quo today with regard to the functioning of the United Nations. How can we assume the possibility of reform in the absence of a level playing field?

Reform can be meaningful only in the context of the alteration of the spirit of the Charter. That, as I have suggested, would assume the presence of a level playing field. However, we must all admit that the concept of reform has gained currency only because of an attempt to admit emerging Powers into the elite group of permanent members of the Security Council. Such an attempt has provoked an outcry against the privilege of the few, and the challenge is how to admit these emerging Powers without disrupting the existing allocation of privilege. Privilege is never surrendered. It is shared only when the political structures compel inclusion.

Reform will not occur within the United Nations until structural changes take place in the distribution of power and more non-traditional Powers emerge. It would therefore be an exercise in futility to expect concrete reforms in the United Nations without structural changes. And what we assume to be reform is essentially an adjustment occasioned by structural pressures. This adjustment would be limited to accommodating the newly emerging Powers, while appeasing the less powerful States through participation without power. The conferral of the right

of veto will mark this distinction. A permanent seat will no longer be synonymous with the right of veto.

For the less powerful, the struggle will not be about power, but participation by affiliation, a sort of status club. Prestige is a preoccupation of the national character, which, despite its superficiality, will be pursued by States seeking to distinguish themselves from the crowd. Hence, the focus of the less powerful will be to join the club, and not the pursuit of the more important goal of integration, which is the only answer for the conversion of the less powerful into emerging Powers that would compel adjustment through structural pressures. Debate is not the mechanism of change.

Individual less powerful States can hope to emerge as powerful States only through a process of integration within regional groupings where power in its entire composite is integrated into a common power capability. This would require integration of economic, military, technological, human, political and social resources into an integrated regional capacity. Only when this objective is achieved will the structure of the international political system yield to adjustment.

Africa cannot, with all of its potential, continue to stand by and accept being condemned to perpetually occupy the position of the least developed continent. The African culture, heritage and value systems stand the risk of being lost in the sea of normative ethics based on Western values. Africa should not miss the opportunity of the new African Union to achieve meaningful integration and cooperation within the context of building a powerful African capability that will allow Africans a say in our common world. This will require a new pragmatism, commitment, vision, cooperation and sacrifice on the part of African leaders. The United Nations can work for Africa; we should learn from the successes of the power brokers who have made the United Nations an important instrument of their foreign policy.

Liberia is a small country in West Africa that suffered seven years of civil war from 1990 to 1997. During the years of the civil war most institutions were destroyed, and a major brain drain resulted, as many Liberian professionals travelled abroad to better conditions. The war also resulted in the destruction of basic infrastructure, including power-generating plants, water plants, schools, hospitals, airports, bridges and private property. Over 666,000 Liberians ended up as refugees and over a million as internally displaced persons. More alarming was the failure of the international community to assist in the reintegration of over 60,000 former combatants who remained unemployed and idle.

In 1997 a constitutionally elected Government was inaugurated facing the challenges of restoring a nation that had been destroyed by war. Four years later, the infant Government still faces an unsympathetic international community; it has received no official development assistance, and donor assistance for United Nations agencies and the non-governmental organizations operating in Liberia has declined over the past four years. The current unemployment rate is 85 per cent, while 80 per cent of the population lives below the poverty line. According to the United Nations Children's Fund, the illiteracy rate is estimated at 80 per cent. Half of all school-age children do not attend school. Infant mortality stands at 134 out of 1,000 live births.

Disability prevalence in the population is 16.4 per cent, of which 12.7 per cent is war-related. The World Health Organization rate for a post-war country is between 7 per cent and 10 per cent. The prevailing causes of disabilities are alarming, with 91.5 per cent acquired due to trauma and diseases. About 21 per cent of urban dwellers and 80 per cent of rural dwellers have no access to safe drinking water. Access to adequate sanitation is unavailable to approximately 70 per cent of the population. An estimated 8 per cent of the population is reportedly infected with HIV.

Since 1999, dissidents have waged war in Lofa County against the constitutionally elected Government in Liberia, further exacerbating the already vulnerable humanitarian situation in the country. Death, destruction, displacement of populations and an increase in Liberian refugees have contributed to what the United Nations agencies call a humanitarian crisis in Liberia.

The Liberian Government's capacity to defend its territorial integrity has been impaired by a United Nations arms embargo, despite the right to self-defence, as expressed in Article 51 of the United Nations Charter. The Security Council has taken no measures to prevent the ongoing killing of innocent Liberians, especially women and children, who are the targets of atrocities committed in Lofa county by armed dissidents.

This country, a victim of war, poverty and disease, is today also the victim of a regime of punitive sanctions imposed by the Security Council in its resolution 1343 (2001). The representative of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs told the Security Council on 5 November 2001 that the humanitarian situation in Liberia today is "abysmal". (*S/PV.4405, p. 32*) Since the imposition of sanctions by the Security Council, and despite the claim by the Council that the sanctions would not have any adverse effects on ordinary people, socio-economic indicators show that the living conditions of the Liberian people have declined dramatically. Available statistics show a direct correlation between the imposition of sanctions and the decline in the living standards of the Liberian people.

The Security Council has imposed a global travel ban on more than 100 Liberians, without any rationalization. My Government has requested the Security Council to make known its criteria for the inclusion of persons subject to the travel ban. This minimal element of transparency and justice has been denied the Liberian Government. Among those subjected to the travel ban are the sick, invalids, businessmen, wives and ex-wives. What a frightening, alarming and dangerous precedent the Security Council has set. Liberia speaks not for itself, as it has already been victimized, but for the rest of you here, who may find similar treatment meted out against yourselves tomorrow.

Mr. Papandreou (Greece), Vice-President, took the Chair.

I await impatiently for a tomorrow when there will be redress from the injustice my country suffers, when all of you here will no longer be obliged to enforce unjust sanctions. Today, I am impatient to hear the General Assembly voice its opposition to the suffering imposed upon Liberian children, women and elderly persons. I impatiently wait for each and every member of the Security Council to respect the human rights of my people. I am impatient for the day when the United Nations will no longer be an instrument that is used to cause the suffering of innocent people. The Government of Liberia calls upon the Security Council to lift all sanctions imposed upon it and to bring to an end the suffering of the Liberian people.

At the twenty-sixth session of the United Nations General Assembly, in 1971, a major decision was taken that to date has had far reaching implications. On 25 October of that year, after two decades of debate, by virtue of General Assembly resolution 2758 (XXVI) adopted by a vote of 76 in favour, 36 against and 17 abstentions) the Republic of China was expelled from the world body. By that decision, a founding Member and its population — at that time of 14 million people — were effectively prevented from associating with the rest of the world. Nothing in the Charter justified such a decision, yet a precedent was set that is still unsurpassed. Nevertheless, it is the conviction of the Liberian Government that the now 23 million peace-loving people of the Republic of China should be allowed representation and participation in our world body. It is also the hope of the Liberian people that the great Chinese people will one day be peacefully reunited under the principles of democracy and human rights.

In conclusion, permit me to allay the anxieties of all those who are preoccupied with the existing situation between the members of the Mano River Union. The leaders of the three Mano River Union States have resolved to put all of their differences aside and not to return to the destructive process of apportioning blame. We are a single people bound by blood, culture and language. We are bound by a common destiny that links us inextricably to one another and is capable of withstanding ephemeral differences. I wholly agree with President Conté of Guinea when he described our quarrel as a family matter. Our sons and daughters, brothers and sisters, and mothers and fathers have commenced the process of reconciliation and confidence-building in Freetown, Conakry and Monrovia. So far, a number of significant decisions have been taken at the level of ministers for foreign affairs and the Joint Security Committee. We ask for the Assembly's support in that process.

I would be remiss if I failed to acknowledge the true fraternal solidarity and support of the Economic Community of West African States, which has stood the test of all of our challenges and difficulties and remains focused on the objective of peace. We too will remain focused on the objective of peace.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to Her Excellency The Honourable Lilian Patel, Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Malawi.

Ms. Patel (Malawi): At the outset, I would like to convey the condolences of the people and the Government of the Republic of Malawi to the Government and the people of the United States of America, as well as to the people and Government of the Dominican Republic and other countries whose nationals died in the plane crash that occurred in Queens, here in New York, on 12 November 2001. Similarly, I also wish to convey my condolences to the Government and the people of Algeria, following the recent flood disaster in which many lives were lost and much property was damaged.

On behalf of the Malawi delegation, I feel deeply honoured to join my fellow representatives in congratulating Mr. Han Seung-soo on his assumption of the presidency of the General Assembly. My delegation looks forward to working closely with him over the coming months in the pursuit of sustainable solutions to the major global concerns and challenges that continue to confront humankind and in the promotion of international peace, security and understanding.

Let me also take this opportunity to express Malawi's deep appreciation of and thanks to his predecessor, Mr. Harri Holkeri of Finland, for his exceptional skills, expertise and unswerving commitment. We have noted with appreciation how his tireless efforts and tenacity have resulted in progress on most of the items of the agenda during his presidency.

May I also take this opportunity to congratulate our Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, and the United Nations as a whole, for being jointly awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for the year 2001. This demonstrates the world's recognition of the great strides the Organization and the Secretary-General have made in carrying forward the mandate of the United Nations. This achievement is a rare feat that we should be proud of, and it should serve to encourage all of us to do more for the good of humanity.

I would also like to reiterate the congratulations of the Government of Malawi to Mr. Kofi Annan on his appointment to the post of Secretary-General for a second term of office.

It is appalling and extremely unfortunate that at a time when we thought we were making progress in human development, some people among us conducted heinous and abhorrent acts of terrorism. The terrorist attacks in this country on 11 September serve to remind us that the global village we are living in is under threat from people who do not value human life and democratic values. The Government of Malawi believes that no cause or rationale can justify terrorism as a means of achieving individual or group goals, as such acts result in indiscriminate destruction of human life and property. Clearly, it is evident that no nation will be spared the far-reaching, devastating impact of the attacks of 11 September.

The Government of Malawi unreservedly condemns those acts and pledges its support and cooperation in the fight against such unjustifiable criminal acts. It is our sincere hope that all those responsible for the terrorist attacks on the United States of America and, indeed, elsewhere in the world, will speedily be brought to justice. As we all share sympathy with the victims of the recent terrorist attacks, let us also demonstrate our unanimous resolve to deal with this problem in a decisive and conclusive manner by ratifying or acceding to all conventions aimed at combating terrorism. That will send a strong message to all parts of the world about our common purpose to remove this evil from our midst.

It is common knowledge that terrorist groups and individuals or entities operate in sophisticated networks throughout the world. No country, therefore, can decisively deal with this problem alone. It is imperative that we all pool our resources to resolutely deal with the cancer of terrorism. Security Council resolution 1373 (2001) forms a sound and clear basis on which our cooperation should be anchored. It is abundantly clear that, if this resolution can be seriously implemented, it may effectively frustrate and check terrorist activities.

It will be recalled that the strategic priority of the Millennium Summit held last year was to find ways of reshaping and reorienting the focus of the United Nations that would inspire a renewed and shared sense of universal mission, thereby enabling it to make a real, quantifiable difference in the lives of "We, the peoples" in the new millennium.

And yet, regrettably, one year after that watershed event, the commitments of the Millennium Summit already seem to be anything but what they are — commitments — and to be mere platitudes on the part of the developed countries. The Summit's much-trumpeted visions, goals and collective social

objectives already appear to have been consigned to the same fate of non-fulfilment that has befallen similar, previous commitments of the rich nations.

It is saddening that, at the height of a global integration drive, a shockingly large number of countries remains outside the globalization loop, while a handful of economically powerful countries of the North controls the pace and terms of participation in the global economy, not least the skewed distribution of its benefits. It is equally disheartening to note, in particular, that the African continent is nowhere near attaining even half as much of the benefit that it has strenuously striven for in the global economy. Now more than ever, our continent is fast sliding deeper and deeper into a plight of deteriorating mass poverty.

This situation is aggravated by mounting external debt, crumbling public infrastructure, marginally functional social services, severe environmental degradation, rising illiteracy and the rapid depletion of human resources and the skilled labour force as a result of endless armed conflicts and the devastation caused by epidemics, such as those of HIV/AIDS, malaria, tuberculosis and other transmissible infections. These are some of the many issues that we have discussed time and again in this Assembly and other forums, and yet we seem to be getting nowhere.

Clearly, Africa is under the threat of imminent virtual exclusion from the mainstream global economy — more so if the underlying spirit, ideals, goals and commitments of the Millennium Summit are not faithfully upheld to ensure the concrete and effective integration of the developing countries into the global economic framework on terms that reflect a shared future of promise of equality, equity, prosperity for all and a just world.

In spite of all these apprehensions, my delegation is still encouraged by the wide global consensus on a range of major issues of critical concern to the least developed countries of Africa. The positive conclusions reached during the special session on HIV/AIDS and the world Conferences that took place this year — the Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries, the United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects and the World Conference against Racism and Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance — reflect a newly emerging global recognition that there is an urgent need to begin concretely addressing the issues that will aggressively advance the economic and social progress of the less developed nations. The declarations and programmes of action agreed at those Conferences must be the centrepiece of any genuine international crusade to reduce social and economic disparities and inequalities between the North and the South. Indeed, the persistence of these inequalities and injustices, in our view, is the root cause of the political, economic and social turmoil currently tearing apart the African countries and some parts of the world. Malawi would like to reaffirm its steadfast commitment to the declarations of commitment, actions and programmes agreed at these Conferences.

What the developing countries need is a chance for a fresh start, which can come about only through a comprehensive package of total debt forgiveness that cuts across the existing initiatives for debt relief, including the enhanced Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Debt Initiative. We also need increased technical assistance, enhanced official development assistance and much greater flows of capital resources and foreign direct investment from developed countries.

We would also like to insist on the genuine commitment of the North to the full integration of our economies into globalized markets through the removal of technical obstacles placed in the way of our exports. The United Nations ought to play a leading role in breaking down the walls of protectionism and to sustain the search for measures that can help the poor nations wriggle out of their poverty and vulnerability. This is in line with the spirit of the resolutions and decisions taken at last year's World Summit for Social Development.

I take this opportunity to pay special tribute to Secretary-General Kofi Annan for the numerous initiatives that he has undertaken to prevent violent conflicts in Africa and other troubled regions of the world. The recent release to the Security Council of his special report on conflict prevention, which addresses in depth the many issues that arose from the Brahimi report, is one practical demonstration of the Secretary-General's overpowering resolve to ensure that the international community addresses political disputes and tensions before they degenerate into all-out armed confrontations and violent conflicts. These pose a major challenge and real threat to international peace and security.

In the same vein, to effectively tame violent conflicts, the United Nations needs to deal decisively with the problem of the illicit trade and trafficking in small arms and light weapons. Their easy availability, transfer and proliferation remain at the centre of the intractability of violent conflicts, rising insecurity and instability in some parts of Africa.

My delegation is most thankful for the success, albeit measured, achieved during the recent United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. In spite of a spirited bid by others to water down the agreed global consensus and programme of action, Africa takes heart in the holding of the Conference itself as a good starting point for putting in place effective measures to curb the immeasurable damage caused by these deadly weapons.

Many evils such as slavery, the slave trade, colonialism, apartheid, genocide, the HIV/AIDS pandemic, poverty and starvation have afflicted the continent of Africa and its people. These evils have been entrenched to such an extent that even the international media only look forward to reporting on the tragedies befalling the continent. However, despite these ills, Africa deserves a special place in the economic, political and social spheres of the world. It is in cognizance of this fact that our leaders, in their quest for a prosperous and dynamic Africa, resolved to transform the Organization of African Unity into the African Union.

The birth of the Union has ushered in the New African Initiative, now renamed the New Partnership for Africa's Development, which seeks to pull Africa out of stagnation and put the continent on a new footing for economic recovery and prosperity as well as for the promotion of human rights and good governance. As a developing region with very limited financial resources, we shall rely on our cooperating partners in order to ensure that our dream for a new Africa is realized. Therefore, I wish to appeal for global support for this noble initiative being espoused by our leaders so that the people of the African continent may see real social, economic and political transformation for the betterment of their lives.

Malawi recently assumed the one-year rotating chairmanship of the Southern African Development Community (SADC). While SADC member States take pride in the relative peace and stability that prevail in much of the subregion, we still have serious concerns about the persistent general economic slowdown and the deterioration of human development in the subregion. SADC is experiencing an unfair share of problems and challenges which require the international community's enhanced generous assistance and good will.

It is common knowledge that SADC is reeling under the pressures of the untold devastation caused by the HIV/AIDS pandemic, which is unravelling decades of hard-earned economic gains. The subregion accounts for 75 per cent of the world's total number — that is, 36 million — of people living with deadly HIV/AIDS. SADC's modest average economic growth rate of 3.2 per cent becomes a cause for serious concern when compared with its staggering population growth rate of nearly the same level.

Apart from causing untold human suffering, the continuing civil wars in Angola and the Democratic Republic of the Congo — two of the subregion's potential economic powerhouses — have hamstrung every genuine endeavour by SADC to promote itself as a prime destination for foreign capital and investment. Therefore, we call upon the United Nations to step up its efforts to bring pressure to bear on the belligerents in Angola and the Democratic Republic of the Congo so that the ongoing peace initiatives can yield the rich rewards of an early and decisive settlement. We also call upon the international community to continue rendering vital support and cooperation to the peace facilitator in the Democratic Republic of the Congo to ensure that the inter-Congolese dialogue bears fruit and serves to consolidate the gains achieved so far by the United Nations peacekeeping operation and the Lusaka peace process.

SADC would also like to see much more pressure exerted on Jonas Savimbi in order to force UNITA to return to the 1994 Lusaka peace framework. Only the intensification of the United Nations sanctions against UNITA and the punishment of those violating the embargo would genuinely achieve that goal.

The attainment of durable peace and stability in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Angola and the removal of tensions in the rest of the subregion would put SADC on a stronger footing for economic recovery and a firmer foundation for sustainable peace, security and tangible economic growth and development.

Time and again, Malawi has spoken in favour of readmission of the Republic of China on Taiwan to United Nations membership, which would grant to that country a well-deserved opportunity for active engagement in international affairs. Malawi finds it grossly unjust that the hard-working and peace-loving people of Taiwan should suffer diplomatic isolation so unnecessarily. Therefore, Malawi would like to appeal to the entire United Nations membership to look beyond narrow political considerations and face up to the geopolitical and economic realities that obtain on both sides of the Taiwan Straits. The diplomatic isolation of Taiwan remains both a curiosity and a contradiction in terms. First, almost every country deals with Taiwan in terms of trade and other forms of bilateral cooperation. Secondly, the isolation of Taiwan violates its people's inalienable right to free association within the framework of the United Nations Charter.

Lastly, let me reaffirm Malawi's trust and confidence in the leadership role of the United Nations in making our world a better place in which to live. I would also like to reaffirm Malawi's unwavering commitment to its obligations and responsibilities as a member of the international community of nations.

The Acting President: I call on His Excellency Mr. Jigmi Yoser Thinley, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Bhutan.

Mr. Thinley (Bhutan): I congratulate the President on his assumption of the difficult role of guiding the General Assembly at its fifty-sixth session. This session is being held during one of the saddest moments in the history of our Organization. Let me assure the President of the full support of my delegation in the discharge of his most important functions.

The twenty-first century will forever be remembered for the fiery hell that engulfed the world on that dark day of a cloudless sky on 11 September. The horrific images of passenger aircraft flying to their doom to cause great death, grief and despair to countless people will always be a scar on our individual and collective memory. Surely, failure to bring to justice those guilty of that crime, and those who follow the same path, would mean our collective submission to an endless reign of terror and to fearful darkness.

It is the wish of the Government and the people of Bhutan that I should, once again, express our solidarity with the Government and the people of the United States and convey our heartfelt sympathy to those who have suffered the irreparable loss of their loved and dear ones. We admire the way in which the people of this great nation have come together to rise to the challenges that the tragic events have left in their wake. We pay tribute to the brave and the selfless who laid down their own lives as they fought to save those of others. Our hearts and minds are with the city of New York, which has not only been a gracious host to the United Nations, but is unparalleled in its generosity in giving shelter, livelihood, hope and joy to people of all races and creeds. Indeed, it came as no surprise that the scale of the tragedy made itself felt not only in the devastatingly high number of victims, but in the fact that people from more than 80 countries were counted among the dead.

A small part of everyone died that day, for reasons that can never be explained or justified. Indeed, human society has been left to ponder its claim to being civilized.

Until the tragedy of 11 September, the threat of terrorism was not fully appreciated. Those who had not felt its demonic wrath tolerated it as just another manifestation of social or political discontent. The current environment throughout the globalized world has harshly and most cruelly removed such misconceptions. People all over the world are losing their freedom, willingly or without choice, in a multitude of ways. And there is a pervasive sense of fear. Freedom is a heavy price to pay for anything. Civilized society ought to provide more liberty, not be cowed into affording less.

The disease that is the cause must be stamped out. A determined and coordinated approach by all countries is the indispensable key. To this end, the United Nations must play the central role. It must inspire, unite and act. It must be behind all individual country, group and global efforts. In this context, the important initiative taken by the Security Council in resolution 1373 (2001) is to be welcomed. However, we must remember that its impact will be determined not so much by the letter as by the spirit with which it is accepted and implemented by all Member States.

For its part, Bhutan will make every effort to fulfil its duty as a Member State and a nation that is fully committed to the eradication of terrorism. Today, I signed the International Convention for the

Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism, and in due course our legislature will clear the way for accession to the other conventions relating to international terrorism.

The reign of terrorists in Afghanistan is coming to an end. It is our hope that the healing of the deep and painful wounds suffered interminably by the helpless and innocent victims will begin immediately. We also hope that, in the coming years, they will be able to find the environment of peace and security that has eluded them for too long. Unfortunately, the period of renewal and reconstruction at the individual, community and national levels will be long and arduous for a country that has been reduced to rubble by war and its ravaging companions. We appeal to the international community to give sustained support to Afghanistan in a way that is sympathetic and responsive to its immediate and long-term needs, while respecting fully the dignity of its proud people.

Even as we call for sustained and adequate assistance to Afghanistan, we must acknowledge that the world is still reeling from the aftershocks of the attacks of 11 September. The cumulative impact on a world economy that was already following a downward trend has yet to be seen. There are other disturbing uncertainties. Clearly, there is a need to better define and understand the scope and limits of the war on terrorism so that the fears of the broader clash that is being spoken of are calmed. How do we create a climate that can prevent the further diversion of resources to defence? Will the onslaught be protracted and consumptive in terms of our combined energy and resources? Amid such doubts and concerns, it is natural that we should worry about how the international community might be able to deliver on the hopes that were raised by the Millennium Declaration a year ago. Our capacity to fight HIV/AIDS and poverty becomes questionable, especially within the time frame we have set for ourselves.

Against such a backdrop, the growing challenge will be how to share and give in difficult times. How does one give beyond the bounds of disposable surplus? As the representative of a developing country, I say this without wishing to undermine the greater importance of raising domestic revenues and devoting them to meeting the targets set. In this context, the defining moment will be offered at the International Conference on Financing for Development, to be held next year in Mexico.

Now more than ever it is necessary to reform the Security Council. We cannot continue to procrastinate on this vital issue. The Council has to be a truly representative body if it is to be relevant, respected and effective. That is not possible when vast continents and significant populations in the world are left out of crucial decision-making processes on international peace and security. Without fair representation, the Council will risk emasculation — faltering on making decisions that are implemented feebly.

The serious humanitarian, political and economic consequences of the terrorist acts demand unity of thought and action on the part of all nations. Terrorism must be rooted out. Yet, as in the conduct of our everyday life, there is a need for balance and moderation. Just as the reasons for soul-searching and doubt in ourselves as civilized beings are compelling, it is my earnest hope that the success of this session will be marked by the profundity of collective wisdom and commitment to restore lasting security, peace and normality.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Ravan Farhâdi, Chairman of the delegation of Afghanistan.

Mr. Farhâdi (Afghanistan): At the outset, on behalf of the Government of the Islamic State of Afghanistan, and on my own behalf, I wish to express my profound condolences to the Government of the United States of America and the American nation, as well as the families that lost their loved ones in the unfortunate crash of American Airlines flight 857 yesterday.

My delegation is very much delighted at Mr. Han Seung-soo's assumption of the presidency of the fifty-sixth session of the General Assembly and remains assured that his able conduct will lead the work of this session to its desired end.

My delegation is also very pleased at Secretary-General Kofi Annan's meritorious winning of the Noble Peace Prize this year, I wish to warmly congratulate him and his fellow recipient of the prize, the United Nations itself.

I am very thankful to all delegations that have mentioned the name and the case of Afghanistan and the need for international help to reach Afghanistan.

The appalling events of 11 September and the somewhat lesser-known event of 9 September — the

assassination by suicidal killers of the great Afghan leader Ahmad Shah Massoud — have changed the world. The United Nations, the international community and the world at large are focusing on a new war, the war on terrorism. My Government and the people of Afghanistan denounced the terrorist attacks against the United States and continue to denounce terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. We ourselves have been captives and hostages of terrorism longer than most. In fact, during 23 years of war in Afghanistan, Muslim Afghans have not engaged in any terrorist acts. Islam is an integral part of life in Afghanistan and teaches justice and respect for human life and glorifies the dignity of human beings.

I quote from the Holy Koran: "We have bestowed dignity on the children of Adam". (*The Holy Koran, XVII:70*)

Islam, in the tradition of the Abrahamic faiths, places great emphasis on peace, compassion and the value of human life. Thus, Islam should be recognized for the principles upon which it was created and not acts resulting from irresponsible interpretations, which are far from genuine Islam. These irresponsible interpretations are based on primitive and sectarian thinking, especially the retrogressive policies against women, which have no place in Islam.

With the strong, broad global coalition on their side, today the people of Afghanistan have been vindicated in their righteous struggle against terrorism and extremism — a struggle pursued single-handedly but valiantly over the past seven years against the terrorist forces of the Taliban mercenaries and their cross-border and international allies, chief among them since 1996 being Osama bin Laden's Al Qaeda terrorist organization.

In this most trying time, when the people of Afghanistan are being liberated from the rule of the Taliban, and when Taliban forces are fleeing strategic cities across our land, including the capital, Kabul, it is evident that the civilian inhabitants of these cities and the people of Afghanistan as a whole, having offered their support to the liberating forces of the Islamic State of Afghanistan's United Front, are deserving in the fullest measure of a Government to which their welfare can be soundly entrusted.

On Tuesday, 13 November, in a series of events rapidly taking shape in and around Kabul, the Taliban mercenaries and their terrorist allies were thought to be holding ground, but abandoned the city in a hasty manner, causing a power vacuum.

With the capital, Kabul, on the verge of chaos and mayhem, the Government forces were left with no option but to dispatch a limited police force to the city. The decision to police the city preceded eyewitness reports of the looting of National Bank assets and the plundering of the city's main currency market and a number of aid agencies by the retreating Taliban forces.

We deeply regret any ill treatment of individuals that may have occurred in isolated cases. We have ordered our security authorities not only to refrain from but to actively investigate any such acts that may have been committed and to prevent such incidents from taking place in the future. Let me reiterate that our desire for peace for all people in our land remains firm and that we will not, now or later, condone any lawless acts aimed at disrupting the crucial process of instituting a broad-based, multi-ethnic and fully representative Government in Afghanistan, as called for by the United Nations and the entire international community.

The Islamic State of Afghanistan hails the new developments as a victory not only for the people of Afghanistan but also for the international community in our shared campaign against terrorism.

Let me assure the Assembly that the recent gaining of ground by the forces of the Islamic State of Afghanistan's United Front in Kabul in no way reflects an intention on the part of the Government of the Islamic State of Afghanistan to monopolize power. Rather, it is our sincere hope that the people of Afghanistan will decide democratically in the near future what form of political system they desire. In this context, we steadfastly support United Nations resolutions on Afghanistan, and thereby the recommendations made by the Secretary-General's special envoys to Afghanistan, Ambassador Lakhdar Brahimi and Ambassador Francesc Vendrell, and will do our utmost for the implementation of the process.

The Islamic State of Afghanistan fully honours its agreement made in Rome with the representatives of the Rome process, led by the former King of Afghanistan, Mohammed Zahir Shah, and remains committed to its implementation.

Today Afghanistan finds itself in a major humanitarian crisis — a crisis such as the world has not

witnessed in recent times. With winter approaching our people are facing famine. Our people will die because they do not have enough food to sustain them through the winter. Many aid agencies began leaving Afghanistan after it became evident that the bombing campaign would begin.

Over the past several years, tens of thousands of civilians have either fled the country or have been internally displaced. The people of Afghanistan are not asking for a favour. They desire first and foremost to return to the position they were in before 1978 — a level playing field where they can govern themselves and grow. Twenty million landmines, a ruined and almost non-existent infrastructure and a very high illiteracy rate do not make for a level playing field. Even a fraction of the benefits bestowed on the international community by Afghan sacrifices can reconstruct our nation.

Today we are charged with finding a solution for Afghanistan, even as problems continue to increase and change on a day-to-day basis. But we must now, not later, think about the people of Afghanistan and about giving them peace after so many years of war.

A broad-based Government, inter alia, through the *Loya Jirga* — Grand Assembly — must be established. All ethnic groups must be equitably and adequately represented and given voice in this broad-based Government. The Hazaras, Pashtuns, Tajiks, Uzbeks, Aimaks, Turkmen, Baluchis and all other ethnic groups of Afghanistan must have fair representation in this broad-based Government.

All these groups make up what Afghanistan is today, and Afghanistan is not complete without any of these groups. For centuries, all of these groups have lived peacefully among themselves without bloodshed, and each one has contributed to Afghanistan and has sacrificed tremendously in the resistance against repeated foreign occupations. For centuries, all these groups, as a united people, resisted foreign hegemonic forces. History has shown that Afghanistan is not for foreign occupation or conquest.

The Islamic State of Afghanistan's United Front wants the rule of law based on Islamic tenets, pluralistic democracy, fundamental human rights, peace, unification and meaningful reconstruction. At our core we wish to uphold human rights for all peoples of our land — men and women. We desire to abide by United Nations resolutions, the rule of law and recognized international norms and principles. We highly appreciate the efforts being made by the United Nations aimed at finding a solution for Afghanistan and support all United Nations endeavours and measures to combat international terrorism.

The future Government of Afghanistan must not be subjected any more to the unilateralism that has blanketed it for so long. The nation of Afghanistan must have, as any nation must have, the respect of and sincere cooperation with its neighbours. The future Government of Afghanistan must not be reduced to a "sphere of influence"; it must be recognized as a sovereign nation in the truest sense. Self-determination for Afghanistan means that no country of the world should have a veto concerning what the Afghans decide for themselves.

Recognition of the principles of mutual respect, non-interference and full sovereignty of Afghanistan will naturally be followed by economic and commercial cooperation. Hence, a sovereign Afghanistan will deploy all efforts to broaden its relations with all of its neighbours, including Pakistan. Such measures as opening up to Pakistan and opening up key transit routes, from north to south and from east to west, ought to be implemented. Afghanistan has to broaden its economic relations with all neighbouring countries. The crossroads at the heart of Asia is situated in Afghanistan, and our country's economic and international development rests largely in utilizing this resource in a progressive and open manner.

I need not remind Members today that a stable Afghanistan means a stable Pakistan and a stable Central Asia. An ignored and ruined Afghanistan would be a calamity for the entire region and the whole world.

The people of Afghanistan must decide what form of Government they desire. No one ethnic group must dominate and no neighbour of Afghanistan has the right to incite, overtly or covertly, one ethnic group against others. It is time for the people of Afghanistan to think about their future and to come together. They must all work together for their country as they have worked for centuries before. It is my aspiration and the aspiration of every Afghan that normalcy will be restored and that we will live in peace.

We, the Islamic State of Afghanistan, and we, the United Nations and the international community, have a duty to rebuild Afghanistan. There must be an

extensive and comprehensive United Nations-led reconstruction plan for Afghanistan. The international community must take the reconstruction of Afghanistan as seriously as it takes the war on terrorism. I submit that reconstruction and a people's hope will do more to eradicate evils such as terrorism and the seeds of terrorism than war can perhaps ever do.

Rehabilitation must begin with addressing humanitarian problems, including the pressing crisis of internally displaced persons and refugees. The longer-term Afghan reconstruction programme must be comprehensive; under such a programme, facilities of all kinds — roads, bridges, hospitals and schools and universities for boys and girls — must be reconstructed. Girls were purposely made illiterate by the Taliban mercenaries. A massive education effort must be undertaken so that our young people can learn skills and grow up to be a new generation for our country. The 20 million landmines must be cleared so that the people can cultivate their land and not have to rely only on poppies to make a living.

In the Afghan reconstruction programme there must be a programme for orphans and widows. The Afghan reconstruction programme must directly help the war-stricken and war-devastated land and people of Afghanistan. Afghans of the diaspora, from all over the world, must come and take part in the Afghan reconstruction programme and help build their country.

I believe that, with the help of almighty God, we can rebuild Afghanistan and that Afghanistan can once again live in peace with its neighbours and can contribute to the prosperity of the international community.

In conclusion, I appeal to the United Nations and to the international community to adopt a new vision for Afghanistan, a vision that will leave behind the death and destruction that has seized its people for so many years, a vision that embraces tolerance and unity, a vision that will rebuild the spirit of Afghanistan and give hope for peace to each and every person of our land. The change must come from each person who calls himself a Muslim and an Afghan; it must also come from each country that calls itself a friend of Afghanistan. Our friends and neighbours must grant us the goodwill to govern ourselves and to be our own people.

The Acting President: I can only wish the best for the representative of Afghanistan, for his people and for his country at this very critical moment in world history.

I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Ahmed Abdi Hashi, Chairman of the delegation of Somalia.

Mr. Hashi (Somalia): I seize this opportunity to extend, on behalf of my Government, my warm congratulations to Mr. Han Seung-soo on his election as President of the General Assembly at its fifty-sixth session. I am confident that, with his experience and profound dedication, he will successfully guide the proceedings of this session. I also avail myself of this opportunity to thank his predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Harri Holkeri, for his excellent stewardship of the fifty-fifth session of the General Assembly. May I also extend our warmest congratulations to the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Kofi Annan, on his election to a second term and on the award of the Nobel Peace Prize to him and to the United Nations.

Last year, at the Millennium Summit held here in New York, the President of Somalia, His Excellency Mr. Abdikassim Salad Hassan, stood before the Assembly after Somalia's absence from the international arena for about a decade. That was a moment of historic significance for my country, which continues to strive to emerge from the abyss of conflict and to reassert its position as an active Member of the United Nations. I reiterate our deep gratitude to the international community for welcoming us back into the fold.

In the last century, humanity witnessed great and laudable achievements in the political, scientific, technological and economic fields. Yet, despite those accomplishments, we continue to face challenges that need to be fully addressed. Conflicts are abundant; poverty is rampant; the economic divide between North and South continues to widen; and the scourge of HIV/AIDS remains unabated in the world. Nations around the globe are reeling from the attendant consequences and call for urgent and immediate action.

The events of 11 September shocked the conscience of all decent human beings. We in Somalia relate to the pain and suffering of the people of the United States in a very profound and special way. The Somali people have been subjected to a reign of terror perpetrated by the warlords. We in Somalia, therefore, know very well what it means to lose loved ones. Let me say that those who committed the heinous and

atrocious crimes of 11 September have nothing in common with Islam or with the Islamic faith. Islam preaches peace within one's spiritual self and with one's neighbours; it preaches tolerance and compassion.

Allow me to reiterate our heartfelt and sincere condolences to the families of the victims and to the people and the Government of the United States of America on their tragic loss. We continue to share their grief and pain.

The inhuman terrorist attacks of 11 September brought to the forefront new challenges to international peace and security. Our fight against terrorism must be based on collective action by the international community and on the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. The immediate and strong response by the Security Council and the General Assembly, including the adoption of Security Council resolution 1373 (2001), reflects our collective approach in the fight against terrorism. The Government of Somalia fully supports Security Council resolution 1373 (2001) and is firmly committed to translate its provisions into action.

Having said that, I must observe that terrorists will exploit situations of injustice and imbalance as well as conflicts in fragile and unstable States. The international community is under a moral obligation to come to the aid of those States in the form of post-conflict peace-building and national reconstruction so that they do not become vulnerable to the evil forces of terrorism. In that context, we welcome the statement made before the Assembly by His Excellency President George W. Bush, in which he expressed the readiness of the United States Government to extend assistance to those countries that lack adequate resources to combat terrorism. A case in point is the situation in my country, where there was a political vacuum and no Government for a decade.

Mr. Gounaris (Greece), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The present Somali Government has been in office for about a year and a few months. It is a Government that inherited destroyed institutions and devastated infrastructure. There are two options before the international community in dealing with the situation in Somalia: watch the country slide back into anarchy and chaos or fully support the struggling Somali State by providing the necessary resources to enable it to play a meaningful role in the fight against terrorism. The Somali Government needs urgent and adequate assistance from the international community to be able to comply with resolution 1373 (2001).

Let me at this juncture address the persistent reports in the media and elsewhere alleging, among other things, the existence of terrorist camps in Somalia. First, I should firmly state that the Somali Government hosts no terrorists nor does it offer bases or training camps for them. My Government has not offered and will not offer them any sanctuary. We will arrest and hand over immediately any known terrorist who comes to our shores. Secondly, we want to challenge the veracity of these reports. It is also important to evaluate objectively the integrity of the sources of this kind of information.

We are a transparent and open society and are more than willing to cooperate fully with the United Nations and with States in this regard. The Somali Government is ready to invite the media and other interested parties to visit our country to verify the facts on the ground. First, we need to see the evidence and establish the facts first. It is a fundamental principle of law and natural justice that every person is presumed innocent until proven guilty. This principle, in our opinion, is equally applicable to States.

In view of my Government's serious concern about these accusations, we propose setting up an international committee of inquiry under the auspices of the United Nations Security Council to investigate these allegations. We also propose that the committee identify Somalia's needs in regard to the implementation of Security Council resolution 1373 (2001). We are fully prepared to cooperate with the proposed committee, if established, in the fulfilment of its mandate.

As I mentioned earlier, the Somali Government has been in office for approximately a year and three months. During this time, the Government has faced daunting challenges, primarily in enhancing security in the capital and others areas. We have succeeded in demobilizing 25,000 militia personnel. We have established police stations and deployed 3,000 police officers in the capital. A judiciary system has been put in place, courts are functioning, and the Government is collecting taxes for the first time in a decade.

The Somali Government continues to search for a lasting peace in Somalia through dialogue with those

outside the Arta process. This is in conformity with the Transitional National Charter and resolutions adopted by regional, subregional and international organizations, as well as the presidential statements of the Security Council on Somalia.

In this regard, let me also refer to the numerous important initiatives that have been launched to promote national reconciliation and peace in Somalia. We extend our profound thanks and appreciation to all those countries that have contributed to the search for peace in Somalia.

Let me, in this regard, pay special tribute to President of the Republic of Djibouti, Mr. Ismail Omar Guelleh, and Government of Djibouti for their significant, continuous and positive contribution to the national reconciliation process. I would also like to thank Mr. Omer Al-Bashir, President of the Sudan and the current chairman of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), for his consistent support for Somalia and the search for a lasting peace in my country. The United Nations, the Organization of African Unity, the League of Arab States and IGAD continue to play a positive role in this regard, for which we thank them.

Finally, I want to express, on behalf of my President, our thanks to President Daniel arap Moi for his recent efforts in bringing peace to Somalia. President Moi's latest initiative was the recent meeting held in Nairobi last month. The meeting brought together the President of Somalia and some of the opposition groups. A joint communiqué was signed, stipulating the principles upon which future talks could be based. We expect a broader-based meeting to be held soon.

In conclusion, let me once again emphasize that Somalia is a struggling country working toward achieving peace. This country needs massive assistance for the reconstruction and rehabilitation of its infrastructure and institutions. We urgently need the assistance and goodwill of the international community. It is my sincere hope that the international community will respond positively and in a timely manner to our appeal for urgent and immediate assistance.

The Acting President: We have just heard the last speaker in the general debate for this meeting.

Two representatives have requested the floor to exercise the right of reply. May I remind Members that statements in the exercise of the right of reply are limited to 10 minutes for the first intervention and to five minutes for the second intervention and should be made by delegations from their seats.

I call on the representative of Turkey.

Mr. Cengizer (Turkey): Today, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia, Mr. Vartan Oskanian, deploring once again the absence of diplomatic relations with neighbouring Turkey, called on Turkey to join in a dialogue, while claiming that Armenia is not willing to permit its tragic past to define its actions in the future.

Unfortunately, what Mr. Oskanian implied today tells us otherwise. Armenia is still willing to usurp an indeed tragic past. Yet the last thing we at this Assembly needed today was the fomenting of hatred. While we do not negate the suffering nor forget the tragedy that befell all the peoples of Anatolia and the Caucasus, we deplore the language Mr. Oskanian chose to employ today. Armenia is haunted by a distorted version of history reflected in its founding documents. It continues to occupy Nagorny-Karabakh and other Azerbaijani territory.

Mr. Papandreou (Greece), Vice-President, took the Chair.

At any rate, Mr. Oskanian's judgements on Turkey are based on falsifications of history. They refuse to this day to see our suffering and fail to acknowledge the responsibility of the senseless radical and revolutionary Armenian leadership of the day for the tragic events which took place. The Armenian Government knows very well the requirements of an honest dialogue and improved relations. Today those elements were absent in the statement made by Mr. Oskanian.

The Acting President: I now call on the representative of Armenia.

Mr. Kazhoyan (Armenia): The issue of the Armenian genocide is not something that needs to be proven. When 2 million people suddenly, in a matter of weeks, disappear from their historic homeland of 3,000 years, that can only be the result of a planned and well-executed genocide. When hundreds of Armenian intellectuals living in Istanbul, including the Armenian members of the Turkish Parliament, are executed

without trial in one day, that can only be the result of genocide. This is absolutely clear. It is clear not only to us but also to a large number of States that have officially recognized and condemned the crime of genocide committed against the Armenian people.

There is one piece of evidence in favour of our position that is more than relevant in the United Nations, and these are the words of Raphael Lemkin, the coiner of the term "genocide" and one of the authors of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. He once said that the international community needed that Convention in order to prevent a recurrence of what happened to the Armenians during the World War I and to Jews during the World War II.

As for the issue of occupying other countries' territories, we believe that the country which itself has committed the crime of aggression and still occupies nearly half of Cyprus has no right to use the turn "occupation" in the United Nations or to use it when speaking about other countries.

Turkey has been using the issue of the Armenian genocide to sabotage all our efforts to normalize our relations with Turkey and to establish good-neighbourly relations between our peoples. Just an hour ago my Foreign Minister repeated his call and confirmed our readiness to engage in a constructive dialogue with Turkey without any preconditions. We hope that this time these calls will not go unanswered.

The Acting President: Turkey has again asked to speak in exercise of the right of reply. The second intervention, according to the rules, should be limited to five minutes.

Mr. Cengizer (Turkey): I understand; we can go along these lines with my Armenian colleague, but I will restrain myself to what Professor Bernard Lewis wrote in *Ha'aretz* on 23 January 1998,

> "The Armenians want to benefit from both worlds. On the one hand, they speak with pride of their struggle against Ottoman despotism, while on the other hand they compare their tragedy with the Jewish holocaust."

That is exactly what is taking place right now.

Mr. Boghos-Nubar, a prominent Armenian leader, himself said that during World War One Armenians had been, since the beginning of the war, de facto belligerents. Continuing, he said that they fought alongside the Allies on all fronts.

What I would like to underline here is that Turkey has never denied the suffering of the gifted Armenian race, but the Armenians want us to honour only their dead, while we say that the deaths of both Armenians and Turks, and of other people, should be honoured. I will limit myself to this.

The Acting President: Armenia has again asked to speak in exercise of the right of reply.

Mr. Kazhoyan (Armenia): I would like only to draw the attention of my Turkish colleague to the fact that it is not the Armenian side that made the comparison between the Armenian genocide and the Jewish holocaust. As far as I can remember, I was quoting Mr. Raphael Lemkin, the coiner of the term "genocide", who was a well-recognized authority on the issue. As for the suffering of the Turkish side, I think there can be absolutely no comparison between the suffering of the executioner and his victims.

The Acting President: I now see that Cyprus has asked to exercise its right of reply.

Mr. Moushoutas (Cyprus): At the outset, Sir, let me say that I am very happy that you are presiding over this Assembly. I could not sit by and listen to my country's name being mentioned as a victim of occupation and not take the floor. It is indeed occupation. General Assembly resolution 37/253 was adopted in this very Hall. This resolution calls for the withdrawal of the occupation troops from the Republic of Cyprus and calls on all Member States to respect the sovereignty, independence, territorial integrity and unity of Cyprus. It also calls upon all Member States to help the Republic of Cyprus so that it may exercise its sovereign right over the whole territory of the Republic.

Of course, Turkey has not done that. What is worse is that Turkey itself voted for General Assembly resolution 3212 (XXIX). This very resolution was endorsed by Security Council 365 (1974), which called for the withdrawal of foreign troops. With the audacity that characterizes Turkey, Turkish troops are still in Cyprus.

The Acting President: I am informed that, according to the rules of procedure, the delegation of Armenia has already made two replies. There are no more possibilities.

I call on the representative of Armenia on a point of order.

Mr. Kazhoyan (Armenia): According to the rules of procedure a delegation can exercise its right of reply twice. My delegation had earlier requested the floor to exercise its right of reply with regard to the statement of another delegation, that of the Foreign Minister of Azerbaijan, which has nothing to do with the debate that was just under way between the Armenian and Turkish delegations. So, I would like to request the floor to exercise my right of reply to the statement of the Foreign Minister of Azerbaijan. With your permission, I will continue.

The Acting President: The rules of procedure say that the number of interventions in exercise of the right of reply for any delegation at a given meeting should be limited to two per item. I am a new President, as you know, so I will have to be guided here. We will pause for a minute.

I have now been guided by my very good colleagues. When we refer to "item" here, we are talking about the general debate. Therefore, you have exhausted the two times you can take the floor today. However, I am informed that you can take the floor tomorrow if you wish.

The President in the Chair

Organization of work

The President: I should like to inform members that, as announced in the *Journal* today, on Thursday, 15 November 2001, at 8.30 a.m., the General Committee will meet in Conference Room 4 to consider a request by India, which has been circulated in document A/56/614.

The meeting rose at 7.25 p.m.

United Nations A/56/PV.54

General Assembly

Fifty-sixth session

Official Records

54th plenary meeting
Thursday, 15 November 2001, 9 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Han Seung-soo ..... (Republic of Korea)

The meeting was called to order at 9 a.m.

Agenda item 9 (*continued*)

General debate

The President: I give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Youssouf Ouédraogo, Minister of State and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Burkina Faso.

Mr. Ouédraogo (Burkina Faso) (*spoke in French*): I should like first of all to offer the profound condolences of Burkina Faso to Algeria and the Dominican Republic following the disasters that have struck those countries.

I would like to convey to you, Sir, my heartfelt, warm congratulations on your election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-sixth session. I would also like to congratulate the members of the Bureau, as well as Mr. Harri Holkeri, President at the fifty-fifth session, for the outstanding efforts that he made during his term of office.

I would like to take this opportunity to pay a resounding tribute to Mr. Kofi Annan, whose noteworthy re-election to the post of Secretary-General of the United Nations confirms the exceptional qualities that he possesses as a diplomat and tireless champion of peace and justice in the world. The Nobel Peace Prize, which has just been awarded to him, is eloquent testimony to that.

Last year, the leaders of the world met here to give new impetus to our Organization and to commit the international community to mobilizing itself more resolutely in the quest for international peace and security and to fighting poverty, injustice and other scourges that threaten the very existence of humankind.

The terrorist attacks of 11 September which struck the United States and plunged the American people, as well as other peoples throughout the world, into grief truly marked a turning point in the development of international relations. They were a brutal and atrocious reminder of both the complexity of problems facing humankind and the urgent need to find appropriate solutions to them. Burkina Faso firmly and unambiguously condemned those barbaric, criminal and repugnant acts, and we condemn them still. Furthermore, we are resolved to take part in any initiatives undertaken by the international community to eradicate terrorism and its causes. That is why Burkina Faso has begun the process of ratifying the Organization of African Unity Convention on the Prevention and Combating of Terrorism, as well as United Nations conventions on this subject.

My Government has just adopted a draft law with a view to ratifying the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the first, second and third protocols thereto, relating, respectively, to the smuggling of migrants; trafficking in persons, particularly women and children; and the illicit manufacturing of and trafficking in weapons. In cooperation with the United Nations, Ouagadougou will be hosting, from 28 to 30 November, a seminar for the foreign ministers and ministers of justice of the

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-178. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

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countries of the Economic Community of West African States, the aim of which is to accelerate the ratification of that Convention.

If it is to be effective, the campaign against terrorism must be part of a coherent and solid world coalition, with its basis in the United Nations. At the same time, it must take into consideration the realities and constraints confronting international relations. In other words, in addition to military action, the campaign must include the most appropriate political and diplomatic measures in order effectively to deal with conflicts and regional political problems and to reduce gross injustice and inequality which, because of the frustration they generate, serve as a breeding ground for extremists and fuel violence and hatred.

As our mobilization to fight terrorism must be total, so also must we see to the prior definition of clear objectives and appropriate methods for their implementation. While it is true that terrorists are our enemies, it is also true that the manner in which we combat them should not provide them with allies. As President Blaise Compaore recently stated:

> "As we see it, there is a risk that, if we are not careful, the responses to the events of 11 September might lead to a catastrophic scenario for humanity, with a tangled web of conflict: conflict between the Judeo-Christian world and the Muslim world; conflict between West and East; conflict between the rich North and the poor South. It is therefore crucial for our current leaders courageously to attack the injustices and inequalities which fuel violence and hatred."

The international community must therefore resolutely commit itself to combating poverty, epidemics, in particular HIV/AIDS, and economic and commercial marginalization, as well as exclusion of all kinds, which continue to be the daily lot of many regions of the world.

Attacking these injustices means necessarily that we have to find a solution to the question of the Middle East. The right of the Palestinians to establish an independent State, respectful of the existence and security of Israel, is a sine qua non here. Because of the continuing tension in that part of the world, convening a special international conference on the subject at the earliest possible date is necessary.

It is also essential to lift the iniquitous embargoes imposed on some States, such as Libya, Sudan, Iraq, Iran, and Cuba. For, not only do these embargoes cause suffering to their people, but they also help to weaken world peace and security.

The Republic of China in Taiwan, which has demonstrated sufficiently that it is a democratic and peaceful State, is prepared to play its rightful role in the concert of nations, and it should no longer suffer from the injustice that we are combating each day. That is why, in the name of equality among peoples and nations, we make an urgent appeal for the readmission of the Republic of China to the United Nations.

Turning to the question of Western Sahara, Burkina Faso has always supported United Nations initiatives and efforts here. Accordingly, the recent plan proposed by Mr. James Baker, the Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General, seems to us to be an acceptable political compromise for a constructive negotiating basis.

One activity that fuels and sustains conflicts and serious banditry in the world is the manufacture, sale and circulation of arms and anti-personnel mines. Burkina Faso firmly supports the actions taken by the United Nations aimed at reaching general and complete disarmament, both at the level of weapons of mass destruction and conventional weapons. As for combating the proliferation of light weapons, in addition to the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) moratorium to which it subscribes, Burkina Faso has set up a high authority responsible for monitoring throughout our national territory the import and use of weapons.

Africa has decided to further unite. It has decided to bring closer together its peoples and economies and to strengthen its partnership with other regions in order to better integrate itself in the world economy. The African Union was set up precisely to accomplish this huge project. Burkina Faso reiterates here the appeal made by the heads of State and Government of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) for the effective support of the international community for the New Partnership for Africa's Development.

The debate in the United Nations should enable all Member States to express themselves and contribute to the discussion on how best to meet the concerns of humanity. All opinions must be heard and taken into consideration. Decisions taken pursuant to the rules

must also be applied by each Member State. This is the sine qua non requirement for achieving a viable new international order based on a necessary dialogue among civilizations and a culture of sharing and solidarity. This new world order, in order to be more just, has to be based on two basic concepts. First of all, there should be a reform of the United Nations to provide a more collective and democratic way of managing the affairs of the world. Secondly, there should be a more equitable distribution of the world's resources, through revision of trade mechanisms and financing for development.

Turning to the reform of the Security Council, Burkina Faso reaffirms Africa's position, which resulted from the Harare Summit, advocating equitable representation of all regions of the world and guaranteeing greater transparency and effectiveness for the United Nations.

Our world is in constant flux. The ardent desire for peace and security and the search for democracy and well-being are, with each passing day, becoming ever more rooted in people's minds. During the past few years, Burkina Faso has undertaken wide-ranging political and economic reforms, which are in keeping with the permanent validity of these universal values.

Politically, the reforms undertaken by the Government, based on a consensus approach, have enabled it to improve the institutional environment and to meet the expectations of the political class and civil society. This involves in particular the status of the opposition, new voting procedures, the single-ballot system, financing for political parties, trade unions and the private press, and the creation of the Constitutional Council, the State Council, the Appeals Court, the State Audit Office and an independent national electoral commission.

Economically speaking, the Government is constantly struggling to improve the living conditions of our people. Need I recall that destitution and poverty are the first way we deny human rights. They deny human beings their main raison d'être: their dignity. Therefore, we have decided to stress the struggle against poverty and exclusion by working out, with our development partners, a strategic framework to fight poverty.

In our global village, happiness for everyone is possible. The best of possible worlds is within our grasp. Scientific and technological progress means that we can overcome the ills that beset humanity. We simply need to unite, show solidarity and act together.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Hassan Wirayuda, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Indonesia.

Mr. Wirayuda (Indonesia): On behalf of the Indonesian delegation, I am pleased to congratulate you, Sir, on your election to the presidency of the General Assembly at the fifty-sixth session. We are pleased that the stewardship of this session has been entrusted to so capable a diplomat from a fraternal Asian country, with which Indonesia has always enjoyed the most cordial of relations.

I wish to preface my statement by expressing once again, on behalf of the Government and people of Indonesia, our deepest condolences and sympathy to the Government and people of the United States with regard to the massive tragedy that they suffered recently, and have borne so admirably.

Indeed, international terrorism today looms on the horizon as one of the major threats to human life and civilization. The truth, of course, is that multiple threats and challenges are an inherent and coexisting feature of inter-State relations. We cannot grapple with this threat and leave other threats to wreak havoc on the world. It is the urgent and compelling task of this world Organization to address them all, for each of them has the potential to destroy a large part, if not all, of the human race.

The threat of nuclear annihilation is still there. It has by no means faded with the demise of the cold war, as the campaign for nuclear disarmament remains stalled. With conventional weapons, mostly small arms, wars and other forms of mass violence are being carried out in various parts of the world. Thus, whole populations — involving millions — are being displaced, maimed or killed, 90 percent of whom are civilians, and the majority of them women, children and the elderly.

In the Middle East, the killing of innocent Palestinians continues even while Israeli forces partially withdraw from occupied Palestinian towns. For as long as the inalienable right of the Palestinians to self-determination is being violated with impunity, there can be no lasting peace in that part of the world.

In the economic sphere, we have not been able to solve the basic problem of poverty in spite of the fact

that we have the resources and the technical capability to at least wage an effective war against this scourge of humankind.

The economies of South-East Asia have just begun to recover from the devastation of a global financial crisis that erupted just a few years ago and already we are facing the unwelcome prospect of its possible recurrence. New international architectures that would shield vulnerable economies from such a crisis remain a distant dream. The global economic environment is simply getting less hospitable to the aspirations of the developing world for growth. Without the resources and technology for sustainable development, developing countries are rapidly losing their natural resources, while the physical environment of the world continues to deteriorate.

To us Indonesians, these global problems become even more poignant as they are replicated in our country and as they impact on the lives of our people. In the financial crisis of 1997-1998, as the rupia plummeted in value and factories and businesses closed down, millions lost their jobs and were reduced to abject poverty. Since then, our economy has begun to recover. Last year, Indonesia enjoyed an economic growth of some 5 per cent, in contrast to the 13.5 per cent contraction that followed the onset of the financial crisis in 1997. Also, in the year 2000, Indonesia attained a level of trade that surpassed those achieved before the crisis. However, the current global economic downturn, compounded by the events of 11 September, has lowered the expected target for economic growth to 3 per cent in 2001.

In the face of these realities, we need massive direct investment flows in order to consolidate our recovery and march steadily on the road of development. We feel that the situation in Indonesia today already merits the confidence of investors, but we can barely make a good case for this in the light of lingering threats to the sovereignty and territorial integrity of our Republic.

Like many other developing countries — and, indeed, some developed countries — Indonesia needs to overcome the problem of graft and corruption in its bureaucracies and in the corporate sector. The deficiencies of our legal system and judiciary and the past human rights record of our police and military establishment have produced less than optimum conditions for Indonesia's economic recovery. These are daunting challenges, as daunting as the global problems that they replicate and reflect.

Yet, in confronting these national problems, I do not despair, just as I do not despair in contemplating the global challenges and problems of our time. I believe that all these problems, global and national, can be traced to a single common root — a deficiency in human relationships — for wherever there is inequality and it is not acceptable to the weaker party, there can only be tension and conflict. Wherever the powerful can get away with exploiting the weak, a sense of outrage smoulders and there can be neither stability nor peace. Wherever there is injustice and it is not redressed, there arises a culture of vengeance.

If the problem is basically an imbalance in human relationships, then the solution lies in the rectification of that imbalance — in the recognition that all human beings are of equal worth and have basically equal rights before the law of God and human law. As they are all equals, each is accountable for what he does to any other and everyone's common sense of justice is satisfied.

This solution is not something I discovered on my way to this forum. It is something that we all have known for a very long time now, and we have been calling it democracy. Against the expectations of many outside — and, indeed, within —our own nation over the past three years, and especially the last six months, and in the midst of our financial crisis, Indonesia has relentlessly pursued the difficult process of reform and democratization. We have been able to manage successive transitions of power in a democratic, peaceful and constitutional manner.

Thus, Indonesia today stands proud as one of the largest democracies in the world. As a nation with an overwhelmingly Muslim population, we are the living refutation of the erroneous notion that Islam and democracy are incompatible. Islam has always stood for the equality and fraternity of all human beings and for the optimum exercise of the human will. If only in that, we Indonesians have a natural affinity for democracy.

The challenge for all of us is to ensure that democracy works and that it does actually deliver a better life for the people. In the case of Indonesia, pivotal to this outcome is the recent introduction of bold and far-reaching measures on the relationship between the central Government and regional

authorities in order to address the legitimate aspirations of the societies in the region. Likewise, my Government has made a democratic response to the challenge of separatism in Aceh and Irian Jaya.

We will sincerely bring redress for their grievances. We will meet their legitimate demands by introducing special autonomy and a greater sharing of resources, and guarantee respect for their culture and ethnic identities. We will not, however, tolerate any acts of terror or violence for separatist ends against the territorial integrity and national unity of our Republic. In this regard, Members of this Organization have extended overwhelming support for Indonesia's territorial integrity and national unity, consistent with the principle of the territorial integrity of States enshrined in the United Nations Charter.

Through the strict and impartial enforcement of recently passed anti-graft laws, we are cleansing our bureaucracy and corporate sector of the taint of graft and corruption. Through strict and equal application of laws on economic reform, we assure every entrepreneur an equal chance in his business undertakings.

We are reforming the legal system and the judiciary so that every individual stands equal before the law, whoever his adversary in litigation may be. Both the police and the military have undergone reform and have proven themselves to be faithful to the Constitution and to the democratic process. They have the encouragement of my Government and the Indonesian people as they continue reforming themselves.

We will see to it, however, that those who have perpetrated human rights violations, including those who carried out the gross human rights violations in East Timor in the wake of the popular consultation, are brought to justice. Thus, immediately after assuming office, President Megawati Soekarnoputri signed an amending presidential decree that would enable, starting next month, an ad hoc human rights court to adjudicate cases of human rights abuses prior to and following the popular consultation.

These are the main lines of our democratic response to the many and formidable challenges that Indonesia must contend with. I have no illusions that they will be met without difficulty and occasional setbacks, but I have faith in the rightness of working for human relationships that are based on the equality of individual human worth. It is the decent, enlightened thing to do. I therefore have no doubt that, ultimately, these measures will yield sufficiently positive results to move us forward on the road of development.

I am no less confident that the democratic response will be just as effective in addressing the global challenges of our time. Consider the problem of armed conflicts in various parts of the world. The use of violence against other human beings, whether carried out through nuclear weapons or through small arms, is an assertion of a view that those others have no equal right to life. That is why violence is escalating everywhere and that is why there are terrorists — madmen who regard the lives of innocent people as worthless compared to their political agenda. In a democratic setting, where everyone is committed to equality and every human life is as precious as any other, violence cannot thrive, certainly not on a massive scale.

If the nuclear disarmament agenda has not been moving forward, it is because the nuclear Powers enjoy a real advantage over everybody else and those that are nuclear-capable strive to become nuclear Powers themselves. Inequality thus becomes an incentive for nuclear proliferation. In a democratic setting, that incentive is not available.

The same is true with respect to the endeavours to reform the United Nations, particularly the Security Council. So long as the present permanent members see others as not equal to themselves and act on that basis, there will never be equitable representation on the Council. To say that we are reforming the world Organization in order to make it more democratic is to put the cart before the horse. First, let us all embrace democracy and then it will not be difficult to reform the United Nations.

In the economic sphere, the fundamental challenge is simply to create a level playing field for all nations, whether it be in trade or international financial flows. We may all be paying lip service to the sovereign equality of all nations, but if a reality check shows that multilateralism is on the wane, that in fact means that a good number of developed nations do not really believe that the developing countries thus deprived are their equals.

International financial flows for development will resume, the debt burden of poor countries will be eased and barriers to the exports of developing countries will

be lifted if and when the entire developed world sincerely regards the developing countries as true equals, and not as recipients of charity. Since people in developing countries, particularly those that are most vulnerable, are down today, they need a helping hand to raise them to a position commensurate with their dignity as equal human beings. In this regard, a special case could be made for the teeming millions in the countries of Africa, a continent that has already given so much of itself to the rest of the world.

The principle of equality among all human beings must be applied as well in the use of natural resources and its profound impact on the environment. It would be the cruellest form of inequality if the present imbalances in the use of resources among nations were left unaddressed and if the present generation were to use the earth's resources and leave nothing to sustain future generations of humanity.

This yearning for democracy has been with us for a long time. It is the spirit behind every reform movement, the French and American revolutions and the struggle of colonized countries for independence, Indonesia among them.

This is the spirit to which the first generation of leaders of Asia and Africa gave voice in Bandung in 1955. It guided the founding and the growth of the Non-Aligned Movement and brought about the demise of apartheid.

In my region, South-East Asia it gave rise to the birth and growth of the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN), just as it earlier ushered in the founding and enlargement of the United Nations. It is what we need today to reform the United Nations, to make it a more effective instrument of global peace and development. It is what we need to translate into concrete reality the provisions of the Millennium Declaration. And, indeed, the democratic spirit is what we need in order to wage an effective struggle against the dark forces of international terrorism. Without that spirit, we can only fail.

The best course, therefore, would be to launch collective action on the basis of the United Nations Charter. For this war against international terrorism to be able to cover all fronts and to be sustainable and imbued with long-term legitimacy, it is imperative that the United Nations play an active and primary role. The global campaign should be complemented at the regional level by coordinated efforts such as those launched by ASEAN just over a week ago. In that way, we will ensure that our response to terrorism is a democratic one.

Indonesia has consistently emphasized the role of the United Nations in addressing the unfolding developments in Afghanistan. It therefore welcomes the adoption yesterday by the Security Council of resolution 1378 (2001), for this development represents manifest recognition of the need to enhance political and diplomatic efforts to find a comprehensive solution to the Afghan crisis. At the same time, however, it is important to underline that the role of the United Nations can only be to support the efforts of the Afghan people themselves, most notably in the establishment of a new and transitional administration that is broad-based, multi-ethnic and representative of all the Afghan people. For its part, Indonesia is committed to supporting the United Nations in these noble endeavours. Indonesia stands ready to contribute to any future peacekeeping operations needed to support peace-building in Afghanistan.

To my mind there is no question of whether the democratic response will work as a way of resolving this problem and all the other global problems of our time. Nothing else will work. The question is whether we are courageous, sincere and enlightened enough to apply it.

History, it has been said, is a race between enlightenment and catastrophe. Let us become enlightened now, before catastrophe overtakes us.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Eduard Kukan, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Slovakia.

Mr. Kukan (Slovakia): At the outset, I wish to join other speakers in warmly congratulating you, Sir, on your election as President of the fifty-sixth session of the General Assembly. It is my deep conviction that in this difficult situation we will, under your experienced leadership, materialize the expectations of the international community, which has always desired to view the United Nations as a reliable guarantor of world peace. I recall our recent meeting in Seoul, and it is a pleasure for me to see you, Sir, presiding over the General Assembly this year. I also wish to thank your predecessor, Mr. Harri Holkeri, for his hard work, dedication and leadership in presiding over the fifty-fifth session of the General Assembly.

The recent brutal terrorist attack against our host country, which has left all of us in deep shock, was undoubtedly also directed against the United Nations and its principles and values, which we as Member States share. This inhuman act was an attack on all of us. However, it has united the international community, which realized the potential danger and threat of terrorism to the existence of human civilization. The international community has responded in the only way appropriate: international terrorism cannot be tolerated; all the nations of the world must stand united in the battle against this evil; and they have to search vigorously for ways to effectively respond to it.

We were relieved to see the United Nations acting promptly and in a very determined way, adopting the very next day General Assembly and Security Council resolutions urging the international community to redouble its efforts to prevent and suppress terrorist acts by increased cooperation and full implementation of the relevant international anti-terrorist conventions and Security Council resolutions. In particular, Security Council resolution 1373 (2001) is of a great importance and must be fully implemented.

We appreciate that after the terrorist attacks, countries and international organizations have manifested moral maturity and their capacity to closely cooperate and coordinate their actions in the fight against world terrorism. We welcome the active and irreplaceable role the United Nations plays in this fight. As United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan explicitly stated in his response to the arrogant and disdainful words of bin Laden addressed to the United Nations, people will understand that the position of the United Nations is the expression of the will of all its Members.

A year ago, many of my colleagues and I elaborated on the role of the United Nations in combating international terrorism. The Slovak Republic joined the anti-terrorist coalition swiftly, effectively and without any hesitation. It will remain a firm part of the coalition of nations and people resolved to fight terrorism and determined to face this threat to peace and security on our planet. The Slovak Republic is a party to 11 of the 12 universal anti-terrorist conventions. Shortly, we hope to ratify the International Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism, which we signed last January. We call on all other countries to redouble their efforts in order to achieve a speedy conclusion of a comprehensive convention against terrorism.

The terrorist attack has certainly changed our perception of the world. A re-assessment of international arrangements is a necessity in this context. After a period of mostly emotional reactions, we now need more qualified answers, supported by resolve and responsibility. I am convinced that the resolve and responsibility will be translated into executive actions and systemic steps by the United Nations.

The legal instruments devised here at the United Nations constitute an especially good basis for deepening the effectiveness of the fight against terrorism. Using the words of the aphorist Blaise Pascal, I want to emphasize that the only thing that remains to be done is to implement all the good principles that have already been laid down. It is encouraging that the words of comfort and the ideas and commitments uttered by high representatives of the Member States of this, the most universal international community, overwhelmingly share that spirit. Slovakia fully associates itself with those views. In that context, we wish to express our hope that the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court will enter into force sometime next year. With that the international community will be establishing a body that will end impunity for crimes of the greatest seriousness, including crimes against humanity.

The world has a unique opportunity to achieve progress in tackling long-lasting conflicts through joint efforts. Slovakia considers United Nations peacekeeping operations to be one of the key and most visible aspects of the Organization's activities. We view all United Nations activities in conflict prevention, peacekeeping, peace support and peace-building as particularly important. It is the people in the regions suffering from conflict who look to our Organization with hope, and we must not let them down.

As a country that is materially and personally involved, we welcome with great attention and devotion and participate actively in the discussions aimed at reforming and improving the efficiency of United Nations peacekeeping. We are ready to continue contributing our share in every possible way to this noble endeavour. The participation of the Slovak Republic in United Nations peacekeeping operations

has grown almost six-fold since the beginning of the year 2000. This year we took part in the United Nations mission in East Timor, where we deployed a level II hospital. In Cyprus the Slovak contingent has replaced Austria and has become the lead nation in Sector 4. We have sent our demining experts and other personnel to the United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea.

I would also like to add my personal note to this description of my country's engagement. For the past two years, the Secretary-General has entrusted me with an exceptionally demanding and responsible task, namely, to serve as his Special Envoy for the Balkans and to oversee the peaceful resolution of the still-smouldering conflict in Kosovo. I am aware of the critical importance of the coming elections to be held in Kosovo under the supervision of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK). I am now therefore in a position to state a single critical thesis: that area must stay multi-ethnic and the international community must continue to be consistent in its policies on the matter.

As a country that is experiencing dynamic development and one that shares a great interest in stable international development and the prosperity of the international community, Slovakia also has an ambition to play a more visible role in the United Nations. Our Prime Minister, Mikuláš Dzurinda, also clearly expressed our position on many other topics and challenges at last year's Millennium Summit. The spirit of the commendable initiatives adopted at the Summit will produce the best results only through their unrestricted practical implementation, although new and unprecedented barriers have emerged on the way.

Our position on the issue of Security Council reform is linked to the importance of making the Organization more effective. Let us be honest and admit that we have not been fully successful in achieving this goal for years, and that we will now have to cope with new and unprecedented challenges. In my letter to the previous President of the General Assembly I emphasized that, in addition to maintaining sufficient representativeness, the Security Council should also preserve sufficient operational flexibility. We also believe that the Security Council should base its decision-making on majority voting, and that the right of veto should only be reserved for decisions taken under Chapter VII of the Charter.

Slovakia supports the enlargement of the Security Council in both the non-permanent and the permanent categories of membership. However, the failure to achieve consensus on the enlargement of one category should not result in blocking enlargement in another category. I avail myself of this opportunity to confirm that while increasing the number of Security Council members in the category of elected non-permanent members, we consider it fully justified to allocate one additional seat to the Group of Eastern European States. Its membership has doubled in the last decade.

Exceptionally urgent current challenges have cast a malicious shadow of destruction over this year's agenda of the General Assembly, which I have not commented on in detail. I would like, however, to assure the Assembly that Slovakia believes in the need for a universal world organization — which the United Nations is — as a source of hope for a better and more just world. We have no doubts about the irreplaceable role of the United Nations in tackling global issues, be it the protection of human rights, the eradication of famine, poverty, diseases and illiteracy or the prevention of drug and arms proliferation or guaranteeing sustainable development. A life of dignity for all of us is really unthinkable without the enduring involvement of the United Nations. However, it requires universal respect of its paramount place in international life, and joint cooperation in intensifying its activities.

In conclusion, I would like to underline the feeling of deep satisfaction of my country, and me personally, with the appointment of Mr. Kofi Annan to serve a second term as the United Nations Secretary-General. I also wish to voice our recognition of the honour given to him personally and to our universal world Organization through the prestigious and well-deserved award of the centenary Nobel Peace Prize, and to congratulate him wholeheartedly on this achievement.

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Israel.

Mr. Peres (Israel): First of all, I would really like to congratulate you, Sir, on your election as President of the fifty-sixth session of the General Assembly. I know that you bring with you a wealth of experience, a breadth of understanding and hope for many people. I would also like to express my highest regard for

Secretary-General Kofi Annan on his well-deserved recognition as Nobel Prize Laureate for his fresh ideas and great vision on how to meet a new world with an open mind, a sense of unity and hope.

There is hidden light and needed hope in this gathering to overturn the darkness that has descended upon us. There is enough strength and resolve in the midst of civilized nations to deflect evil.

Humanity woke up happy to welcome the twenty-first century. We turned around and looked, and there was brightness and freshness in the air. We had departed from a traditional history that was written with red ink — wars, skirmishes, conflicts and murders — many of which arose because human existence was dependent upon land and natural resources. We have had to protect our own lands.

Modern science emerged to supersede land, opening new horizons of limitless opportunities. Science rendered borders marginal, and old prejudices and distances began to dissipate from our minds. Technology created a new interdependence. No longer were our connections dependent upon land or sea — upon distance. Air became the new means of communication for nations, peoples, businesses and development. High technology introduced new promises and recalled the importance of old values.

The perception was that every person, irrespective of location, race, religion or sex, could reach new heights. And then we learned that high technology is not just a technical matter. We cannot separate technology from values; it is impossible.

For example, you cannot combine lies and science. You cannot lie scientifically. To have a science-based economy, you have to pursue peace uncompromisingly and openness uninterruptedly. Science requires an open society; it demands constant dialogue. You cannot have new innovations without unrestricted research. You cannot have unrestricted research without being a free society. You cannot develop a scientific economy without making education a top priority, available and accessible to all people. You cannot attract investment unless you have transparency.

In a competitive world, to keep young scientists your land and water should be free from pollution, your financial system free from corruption, your government without arbitrariness. Truth, freedom and openness became conditions for science and high technology and, consequently, for the advancement of any society.

It is true that the world is still divided between the haves and the have nots. But for the have nots, a new option is that of becoming connected to the new age and the more developed aspects of our times.

There had been a new beginning, but like many beginnings, one mixed with shadows and revolt. The shadows were not yet heavy; at the beginning they looked pale and distant. So we felt like one promised world, like one assembly. The economy was no longer national; it became global — open to every nation. And since we could not form a global government, the national Governments agreed that the global economy would be managed by private enterprises — hence, privatization. Globalization decreased the importance of traditional States and increased the importance of non-governmental organizations and worldwide connections. It looked as if borderless progress was evolving. And then ambushing clouds, global in nature, moved in as a new horror.

The horrific events of 11 September — the savage attack on innocent American people — signalled a new warning to world history. On 11 September, we learned that the very same technology I mentioned earlier — openness and a frontier-less, connected world — could also spread viciousness. This attack was brutal, because it was directed at everything we stand for, against everything for which nations, and the United Nations, have toiled.

The emerging terror, like the emerging economy, is no longer national or delineated by boundaries. Rather, it is borderless, and it contains unlimited, awesome potential. It can begin with knives, and it may wind up with germs. Terror does not have a visible address, a merciful lord in heaven, a court or an elected government. Nor does it need the approval of the many. It is built on the fanaticism of a small group of murderers, lacking the checks and balances of an accountable society. It may arrive unexpectedly, uninvited, spreading fear in every corner of the globe, paralysing us at work and home, grounding flights, impeding movement, disrupting commerce and production. Eventually, it can endanger the freshness of air, the purity of water.

Global economy arrived as an historic surprise; global terrorism also arrived without prior warning. But, whereas a solution was found to regulate the

global economy, through privatization, there is no private answer to meet global terrorism. Many nations have armies, without necessarily having enemies. Yet, for the time being, global dangers remain without global answers or global armies.

The United States played the pivotal role in introducing the new economy. Now again, it falls upon the United States, as the first target of global terrorism, to offer a strategy, to take the lead and to bring back the promise of freedom and security to many of us.

We pay tribute to the United States, a nation that had the capacity to welcome new modes of creativity, planning, production and innovation at home and abroad. And while becoming mighty, it did not stop caring for the rest of the world. The United States has helped nations in Europe and Asia and elsewhere regain freedom and security in times of danger.

American boys fought, and many of them lost their lives, in European and Asian wars. They won wars and gained land, but they did not keep those assets for themselves. They returned to Japan an improved Japan. They returned to Germany an improved Germany. The Marshall Plan helped to rebuild Europe. Needy countries were offered food and assistance, industries were restored, economies were rehabilitated. There was generosity in their victory. Indeed, America has emerged as the "indispensable nation".

Now America has become a target for reasons which are not necessarily its own. Terrorism was directed at America to frustrate its democracy, weaken its respect for human rights, reduce its enterprise and threaten its individualism so that it would not be able to help others. This was an assault on the very existence of humanity.

The bin Laden group are afraid of progress. They are proponents of backwardness. They want us to return to living in caves. They represent the darkest ages in the annals of human history. They are self-appointed killers of any persons who think differently from them. They are not just evil — they are an agency of death.

America is not just a new world or continent — it is a great constitution, a shining city on the hill of freedom. It is not just a concrete structure — it is a solid idea. You can attack America, hurt it, but America cannot be destroyed.

America's war on terrorism is the war of all of us. By "us", I mean every country in this Assembly and every human being on this planet. Bin Laden claims that he fights crusaders, who no longer exist. Bin Laden claims that he wants to help the Palestinians, but in the eyes of the Palestinians, he is an obstacle, not an aid.

Israel made peace with Egypt and returned all the land and water without bin Ladens, without terror. We did likewise with the Jordanians — not because of terror, but because terror came to an end. At Camp David in July 2000, we offered the Palestinians practically all the land without bin Ladens, without terror. And if there remained a difference of 1 or 2 per cent, that does not justify the killing of thousands of men and women in America. Political differences do not justify murdering even a single child, no matter of which nation.

Bin Laden and his abhorrent ideas can never contribute to peace. They offer no solution and no hope to any nation, religion or person. They spread hatred, disseminate fear and plant mines. They are a catastrophe at large.

The new world economy enabled two of the most populous countries — China and India — to move forward and offer new life and opportunity to hundreds of millions of people. It has changed the face of Europe. It has reversed the fortunes of Latin America. It has extended an open invitation to every country to acquire computers, widen education, open its gates and join a new age without giving up its old values and traditions. The new world economy called for an assembly of responsible nations to build a dam against terror, knowing perfectly well that the fight against terror cannot be postponed, cannot be forgiven, cannot be compromised. It is a matter of life and death for humanity in the new chapter of our existence.

All of us, nations and individuals, will either contribute to safety and freedom or become targets of death and backwardness. Every country must choose its place in the new world, either in the realm of science and technology or in the wastebasket of the old land economy, dependent on the whims of nature, condemned to the poverty of hopelessness. It is the responsibility of affluent nations to share the wealth of knowledge so that others can join them. Rich countries should become a locomotive for the deprived, not a luxury liner for the privileged.

We pray wholeheartedly from the great and united city of Jerusalem, as we did in the early days of our existence, that we shall know again how to distinguish between good and evil, between *tohu va'vo-hu* — chaos — and a new tomorrow. Our region gave birth to the greatest prophets, their moral dictums setting the moral fabric of our society. They have guided us to trust and follow reason and realism. But we were forced to follow funerals more than reason. This has exacted a heavy price from Jews, Muslims, Christians, Druze. It is time that we rediscovered the Ten Commandments, holy to all of us.

Right now it looks as if we are again sinking into the past. The emotional conflict is greater than the territorial gap. It is more difficult to muster the strength and summon the spirit than to divide the land. In spite of these difficulties, I daresay there is a hidden opportunity in the vast divide. I feel strongly that while we cannot recover lost time, we can introduce a new vista in the Middle East.

Until now, the world related to the Middle East. Now the Middle East has to relate to the new world. Our neighbours — Palestinians and Arabs — know that Israel is committed to contribute whatever it can to renew a real peace process — not by force, not by imposition, not by unilateral action, but through a negotiated agreement, an agreed peace. There is no peace but an agreed peace. Just as one cannot applaud with one hand, there cannot be a one-handed peace.

Problems, naturally, have a date of birth. Solutions must reach their maturity. It may not happen at once, but it will happen. Yesterday, you would hardly find, for example, support for a Palestinian State and, although this is not yet a formal policy of the Government of Israel, there is now support for Palestinian independence and for a Palestinian State. We do not want to dominate the Palestinians; we want them to breathe freedom, to create a new economy, to maintain their traditions, to enjoy the highest level of education and to provide real security to all parties.

As far as Israel is concerned, we are convinced that good neighbours are better than good guns. In modern times, you cannot have real security dependent only on fences, walls, fortifications or trenches; not even on tanks and guns and missiles. All these measures have already become anti-measures, making them incomplete and temporary. The only strategy that cannot be ignored is neighbourly relations, such as the common market in Europe, the Rio Group in Latin America, the North American Free Trade Agreement in North America, the Association of South-East Asian Nations in Asia and the New Partnership for African Development in Africa. All these frameworks have shown that answers to old historical, military and political conflicts may reside in the economic domain.

What endangers the new solution is terror. Terror is again endangering the world. The division is no longer between East and West, North and South, but between the union to stop terror and those who refuse to recognize its menace. The assembly against terror comprises most of humanity: the United States, Europe, China, Russia, India, South America, many countries in Africa and many countries in the Muslim world.

Democracies must have a non-democratic institution to defend themselves. Armies are non-democratic, but without them democracy would not prevail. You may have many views in a democratic society, but only one authority that controls the military and its arms. Armies must be subordinate to the elected political body, but if you have one political authority and several armed groups, you can have neither democracy nor security.

The Palestinian Authority, which is a State in being, must establish one authority over all arms, all armies and all use of arms, not for the sake of Israel, but for the sake of peace and for the sake of its own destiny, so that bullets will not negate ballots.

As long as terror persists, Israel has no choice but to defend its people. The word "terror" does not describe an abstract dilemma for us. It refers to a reality of between 30 to 40 violent incidents every day — shootings, bombings, ambushes and killings. It is perpetrated by suicide bombers who have no respect for life, either their own or that of others. The only place they can be intercepted is at the point from which they depart.

Israel is, by definition, an experienced member of the anti-terror camp. We know that terror can never win if people protect and preserve their fundamental security. Terror is strong as long as anti-terror is weak and terror is frightening as long as people are afraid of it. Terror basically represents cowardliness and does not serve any real purpose. Terror neither follows justice nor serves goals. It is not a remedy; it is a malady.

We are at a juncture. The world is pursuing new opportunities and frontiers. No longer will it be a world divided between developed and underdeveloped nations, black and white or men and women. It will become a world where every person will have access to knowledge and opportunity to participate in the new genesis. States have become weaker economically and strategically because economy and strategy have themselves become global. Yet we do not have organized world institutions to secure the globe and distribute wealth more justly.

Two courses are open to every State: either to join the new economy or to submit to old terror; the creation of wealth or the threat of death. Each must make its own choice between the promise of economy or protest by terror. The Global Compact initiated by the Secretary-General offers us a road map to the former. It defines the functions and contributions of the United Nations and imposes responsibilities on all of us — nation States, the private sector and civil society. It provides us with hope that, even as crises exist, obscuring the opportunities just visible from the corner of our eyes, the path to progress is clear to all with the courage to embrace it.

We woke up to the twenty-first century with such optimism. We must overcome the dangers so that our children will again be raised in a world of almost limitless opportunities. It can be done. We have learned in Jerusalem that we can make a promised land into a land of promise for all of us.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Abdulaziz Kamilov, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Uzbekistan.

Mr. Kamilov (Uzbekistan) (*spoke in Russian*): Allow me to convey our sincere congratulations to Mr. Kofi Annan on the occasion of his re-election to the post of Secretary-General, as well as on winning the Nobel Peace Prize for 2001. We also congratulate Mr. Han Seung-soo on his election as President of the General Assembly at the current session and we join those who have already expressed gratitude to Mr. Harri Holkeri for his excellent organization of the fifty-fifth session, which went down in the history of international relations as the Millennium Assembly.

This session of the General Assembly is taking place in special circumstances. There is no doubt that the tragic events of 11 September represent an objective reality that has prompted the international community to critically reassess the situation, which requires the elaboration of common positions in the combat against international terrorism, based on the provisions of the United Nations Charter on safeguarding comprehensive peace and security.

Today, it is evident that terrorism is related to extremism of every stripe — political, religious and ethnic — as well as to separatism and drug trafficking. These are the principle threats to the present and future of humankind, a plague of the twenty-first century that can enter any household. No one carries insurance against this evil.

The international community is becoming increasingly aware of the indivisibility of security. In accordance with this fundamental principle and in view of the current international situation, Uzbekistan commits itself to go all the way in its fight against terrorism as a global phenomenon. Only through joint, coordinated efforts of the entire international community can we eradicate this evil. No one has the right to stand aloof from this battle.

We are acutely aware that, today, it is absolutely unacceptable to content ourselves with mere declarations and statements. It is time we supported our words with action. Before it is too late, we must take this opportunity to quit the cautious and defensive stance adopted in the struggle against international terrorism and to go on the offensive.

Such an approach is also dictated by a simple and obvious truth: it is impossible to come to an agreement with terrorists. Not only modern experience in combating terrorism but also the experience of history attest to this fact. The only way to deal with terrorists is to isolate them and stand up to them in the most uncompromising and resolute way.

Given the nature of international terrorism and its extensive organizational and financial network as well as its considerable material and technical resources, it is essential to devise a global counter-terrorist strategy that will clearly define the following: first, the parameters of an effective legal framework as well as the organizational foundations for international cooperation in this area; and secondly, forms of concrete joint action at both the global and regional levels as well as on a bilateral basis.

Recent events have demonstrated clearly that terrorism is the most dangerous and treacherous enemy

of the international community. I think it may be relevant to remind Members of the address that the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Mr. Karimov, made to the General Assembly on 8 September 2000 from this rostrum. He sounded the alarm, trying to draw the attention of the international community to the

> "... war in Afghanistan, which has continued for more than 20 years ... Afghanistan has become a training ground and hotbed of international terrorism and extremism, and the main source and the warehouse of world drug production, which earns billions of dollars and fuels international terrorism." (*A/55/PV.7, p. 15*)

He also emphasized that this is "a threat to the security not only of the States of Central Asia, but of the whole world". He unambiguously pointed to the particular danger that the world would face if the terrorists were to gain access to deadly weapons such as chemical, biological and other forms of weapons of mass destruction. Here it is pertinent to ask: Was this not a timely appeal?

Uzbekistan has been actively engaged in cooperation with the anti-terrorist coalition. We consider the anti-terrorist operation in Afghanistan as, first and foremost, a means to destroy the terrorist bases and camps in that country as well as to eradicate conditions favourable to terrorist activity.

The Uzbek people, being heirs to the great Muslim culture and having made a major contribution to the development and flourishing of Islamic civilization, realize that this operation is not directed against either the people of Afghanistan or the religion of Islam. War has been declared against terrorists and their centres and training grounds, not against the peaceful population.

Uzbekistan and Afghanistan have a long history of neighbourly and mutually beneficial relations going back to antiquity. The Amu Darya River has always united us, not separated us. Uzbekistan has never had a conflict either with the Afghan people or with Afghanistan as a State.

The civil war in Afghanistan, which has continued for three decades and reached its apogee during the short period of Taliban rule, has destroyed the country's economy and caused the Afghan people great distress, and it is a threat to the very existence of Afghanistan as an unified State. We support the efforts of the international community aimed at immediate measures to adopt large-scale programmes for the post-conflict rehabilitation of Afghanistan and concrete humanitarian aid for those who urgently need such assistance in their plight.

Uzbekistan, in close collaboration with the United Nations, is already actively participating in the delivery of international humanitarian aid to Afghanistan. For this purpose, we have provided all the necessary infrastructure, including that in the city of Termez, in immediate proximity to the border of Afghanistan.

Finally, in light of the latest events, including both the acts of terror in the United States and the start of the anti-terrorist operation in Afghanistan, I would like to draw the attention of participants in this session to the Uzbek proposal to establish within the United Nations system an international centre to combat terrorism as a realistic mechanism for taking a collective stand against terrorist aggression.

In discussing the organization of the international struggle against terrorism, we should not forget yet another equally dangerous threat — drug trafficking, the main financial support for terrorist and extremist activities. In recent years, the States of Central Asia have found themselves practically face to face with large-scale aggression unleashed by the international narcotics syndicates. It is perfectly clear that no single country, no matter how powerful its resources, can hope to confront drug trafficking successfully unless it enjoys the broad support of the international community. In our view, international cooperation should be based on mechanisms that are adapted as much as possible to the current situation and are capable not only of neutralizing existing sources of narco-aggression but also, and more important, of preventing them from emerging.

Recognizing the urgent need to intensify the international struggle to face common threats, Uzbekistan accords great significance to the issue of the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction in Central Asia. Given the unstable military and political situation in the region, this problem is emerging as a real threat of continental and global proportions.

In this respect, the functional capabilities of the Central Asian nuclear-weapon-free zone — an initiative put forward by Uzbekistan at the forty-eighth

session of the General Assembly in the spirit of the Non-Proliferation Treaty — are of particular importance. We much appreciate the efforts of the United Nations in supporting the activities of the Regional Group of Experts who are working on the text of the nuclear-weapon-free zone treaty, and we call upon the General Assembly, its President and the Secretary-General to lend their support to the process of formalizing and adopting decisions on this issue.

Uzbekistan supports the provisions in the report of the United Nations Secretary-General concerning the prevention of armed conflict. We consider them to be fundamental guidelines for consultations on this issue.

We also stand for the earliest completion of the United Nations reform process. We welcome certain areas of progress in the work of the Security Council with regard to ensuring its transparency, the enlargement of its membership and other matters related to enhancing its effectiveness. With a view to increasing the effectiveness of the United Nations and in the interests of preventing and settling crisis situations, it is extremely important to intensify collaboration between the United Nations and regional security institutions, as well as to enhance the work of its own regional offices.

Uzbekistan has an interest in developing and enhancing dialogue and cooperation with all States that display an interest in strengthening peace and stability at the regional and global levels.

The President: I call on His Excellency Mr. Samuel Insanally, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Guyana and former President of the General Assembly.

Mr. Insanally (Guyana): Although the embers from the towering infernos which resulted from the attacks on 11 September have not fully died, it may nevertheless be possible to analyse the impact which that horrific disaster has had on international relations and, more particularly, the political, economic, and social consequences which it is likely to have for the world. Such an analysis, it is to be hoped, will instruct us on how we may best respond to these new challenges and pursue the twin goals of global peace and development in this new, twenty-first century.

Mr. President, it augurs well that this examination will be conducted under your guidance, since, coming as you do from the land of the morning calm, you will no doubt bring to bear on our debate not only a fresh and dispassionate view, but also a ray of hope after the long dark night through which we have just passed. My delegation offers you our warmest congratulations and good wishes as you continue to preside over the work of this historic General Assembly, which, though inaugurated in the depths of despair, may yet hold out the promise of salvation for mankind.

It would be remiss of me were I not also to extend our gratitude to your distinguished predecessor, Mr. Harri Holkeri, who presided with great verve and vigour over the Assembly through very difficult and interesting times. He has contributed much to the revitalization of the General Assembly.

To the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, I convey our greetings and commendation for his sure and steady leadership of our Organization. The recent award of the Nobel Peace Prize to him and the United Nations is a source of great satisfaction and pride for Guyana and, indeed, for the entire membership of this body.

As was so aptly stated by the *Economist* of 15 September, the terrorist attack on the United States altered the geopolitical landscape as indelibly as it did the Manhattan skyline. The world is a changed place since that horrendous event, changed in that we suddenly find, under threat, by unorthodox and hitherto unimaginable means, the values by which our Organization is driven, values the attainment of which have been the object of our onerous and protracted labours for a period extending over many decades. We cannot help but feel a sense of sorrow and shame that such a barbaric act — as the destruction of the World Trade Center and a part of the Pentagon most certainly was — could have occurred in this day and age only a short distance from this house of our common humanity.

Like most leaders of the civilized world, the President of Guyana was swift to condemn this egregious crime. As a small and vulnerable State, with limited ability to defend itself in the event of encroachment on its territorial integrity, Guyana cannot accept the threat or the use of violence to resolve conflicts and disputes, whether inter-State or intra-State. All differences must be settled, as called for in the Charter of the United Nations, by peaceful means, such as those prescribed in Article 33.

The violence which was visited two months ago upon some 5,000 human beings — including many of

our own nationals — in this our host city and, indeed, before that, upon so many other peoples and places in the world, must be not only roundly condemned but also condignly punished. The international community must now develop an arsenal of appropriate legal instruments, including a comprehensive convention against terrorism, to combat this new enemy of our times. The message must be clearly sent to all who would use terrorism to pursue their objectives that their actions will not be tolerated by the Members of this Organization but, instead, will be dealt with firmly with the full force of the law.

At home and in our various regions, we must build defences that are strong enough to keep out terrorism and its concomitants, such as arms and drug trafficking and other forms of transnational crime. Within the Caribbean Community, of which Guyana is a member, we have agreed to set up mechanisms for information sharing and coordinated action to deny these criminal elements access to our territories. A regional task force has been established to identify measures necessary to creating a *cordon sanitaire* to help insulate us from their onslaught. This is not an easy mandate since, as the immigration doors in the developed countries become more tightly closed, hundreds of criminals who have grown up in these societies are being deported now to our countries which, because of severe financial and human constraints, are ill-equipped to handle this influx.

Although perhaps not as immediate or striking as these political and security consequences, the economic and social impact of the 11 September disaster has been no less powerful and pervasive. All countries have undoubtedly been affected by the disaster, but small and vulnerable States such as my own will find it especially difficult to cope with the resulting hardship. Our countries, with far fewer alternatives available to them than to the more developed, because of an unfavourable international economic system, high levels of external debt and unequal terms of trade, will suffer disproportionately. The exporters of primary products, now as in the past, are the first to suffer a downturn in the world economy and the last to recover — a process that occurs with a frequency that is altogether too depressing.

These imbalances and asymmetries which seriously affect the progress of developing countries are now likely to become even more pronounced in the rapid process of globalization. Still, as is often said, "It's an ill wind that does not blow some good". We would therefore wish to believe that out of the calamity will come an improvement in our lot. We should not be so foolish, however, as to think that this will happen automatically. Salvation will depend on our willingness to learn from our experience and to do better in the future. From the ashes of the Second World War arose the phoenix of the United Nations, giving hope to new generations that they could live in peace, prosperity and larger freedom. Sadly, the end of the cold war did not generate a similarly bold enterprise, leaving humanity to wander aimlessly in search of peaceful coexistence. We must therefore, before it is too late, honour our commitment to the United Nations Charter and create a new vision and strategy with which we may face the challenges of this new era.

In keeping with the spirit and substance of our historic compromise, we must act responsibly to remove from our midst all threats to global peace and security. Foremost among these is the situation in the Middle East, at the core of which is the Palestinian problem, stemming from the persistent denial to an entire people of the enjoyment of their basic and inalienable rights. The peace process must be immediately re-engaged with seriousness of purpose and determination to put an end, once and for all, to the senseless violence and bloodshed which has been the unhappy fate of the Palestinian people and others. They, as well as all other peoples in the region, must be allowed to live in a State of their own, free from fear or want, within safe and secure borders. However, it is not only the Middle East which suffers from the ravages of conflict. In far too many places — in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean and Europe, the risk of violence is ever present, fuelled by a variety of factors and made more dangerous by the possibility of further conflagration. To avert these threats, we must fully utilize the machinery provided in the Charter for the peaceful settlement of disputes.

Yet, it is important in all of this that the Agenda for Peace not be allowed to diminish or to displace the Agenda for Development since, were this to happen, the prospects for any durable peace anywhere would be virtually non-existent. Peace and development are inextricably intertwined, and any attempt to separate them would not only be artificial but totally dangerous. We would do well to bear this in mind should recent events prompt a reordering of global priorities and lead to a diversion of attention from economic and social

issues to purely political and security concerns. Already, in the immediate aftermath of the attack, the President of the World Bank was reported to have said that the 2015 target for halving global poverty could not now be reached and that, in fact, poverty would increase over the next year or two. This deterioration is not easily contemplated by small economies like our own and those of the Caribbean region.

In our view, it is imperative that the United Nations now actively pursue the Agenda for Development to enable developing countries, especially the small and the vulnerable, to ride out the current political and economic storms. The upcoming International Conference on Financing for Development, which will take place in Monterrey, Mexico, next March, represents a unique opportunity to examine both the internal and external constraints that significantly affect the mobilization of financial resources for development, as well as to collectively address the inefficiencies and inequities of existing financial markets. The high concentration of these markets on existing financial assets aimed at short-term profit, rather than on new assets linked to the creation of wealth and employment for longer-term development, remains a source of great concern and must be remedied.

I think that we all must now acknowledge that the prevailing international system of development cooperation is seriously flawed and has failed to achieve its primary objective of increasing growth and improving the quality of life in poor countries. Inherent in this system are many debt and poverty traps that continue to ensnare millions of the world's poorest people, many of whom now have to face diseases such as AIDS. Not only is the experience painful, but it often also deprives the poor of their basic human rights, there being an undoubted nexus, now universally recognized, between the actualization of human rights and economic development. It is out of this recognition that my delegation, last November, brought resolution 55/48 before the General Assembly on the role of the United Nations in promoting a new global human order.

The proposal for such an order acknowledges that the major constraints affecting economic and social progress in developing countries reside in the capacity limitation in the critical areas of markets, administrative and institutional infrastructures in both the public and private sectors, the leveraging of resources and the ability of developing countries to negotiate as equal partners in a number of forums outside the United Nations. This proposal therefore seeks to improve the effectiveness of development cooperation programmes, to optimize scarce financial resources and to reduce the spread of poverty. It also addresses new ways of managing development cooperation that would significantly overcome problems of aid dependence, current imbalances and asymmetries in international trade, and the high indebtedness that continues to plague developing countries.

These objectives, in the view of the Government of Guyana, can be achieved through a comprehensive dialogue among Governments, based not only on political and economic considerations, but also on ethical and moral principles that are necessary to the creation of a more humane and just order in the world. This dialogue, which began at the last session of the General Assembly, will be renewed at the fifty-seventh session, when, we hope, the concept will be further embedded in the international consciousness and ultimately accepted as the way forward to a more enlightened system of international relations.

It is entirely appropriate that this dialogue should be held within the United Nations, since the multifaceted and transnational nature of today's challenges requires a multilateral, rather than a unilateral, approach. There is no doubt that the United Nations is ideally suited to promote this global partnership in an environment that today requires firm, focused and inclusive governance. Given the universality of the Organization's membership, the principles and values that it has long upheld and the growing interest of civil society in its activities, the United Nations has a singular opportunity now to exercise a leadership role in international political, social and economic policy-making.

At this time of great uncertainty and trepidation, therefore, we must recognize, now more than ever before, the continuing need for the United Nations Organization which, despite its many achievements in its 56 years of existence, has yet to fulfil its full potential with regard to international cooperation. We must therefore not allow complacency, self-interest or unilateralism to compromise that global vision of the founding Members.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Alhaji Sule Lamido, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Nigeria.

Mr. Lamido (Nigeria): Recent events have manifestly brought to the fore the importance and relevance of the United Nations in the pursuit of global peace, security and stability. Only last year in this historic Hall, world leaders at the Millennium Summit reaffirmed their solemn commitment to strengthen the capacity of the Organization in this very important area. Yet, two months ago, on 11 September 2001, the efforts of our Organization were temporarily called into question by terrorist attacks on the United States.

As a country which was directly affected by the first terrorist bombings in Dar es Salaam in 1998, in which our embassy building was destroyed, and because we lost nationals at the attack on the World Trade Center, Nigeria fully identifies with the rage and grief of the bereaved families and the victims of these barbaric acts.

Terrorism is a global menace that challenges the very basis of our civilization. It must therefore be confronted globally. That is why Nigeria fully endorses the prompt action taken by the General Assembly in condemning these attacks. We fully support Security Council resolution 1373 (2001), because the measures called for in the resolution would significantly reduce the capacity of terrorists to carry out such acts. Nigeria is committed to the implementation of the resolution's provisions. Let us sustain the unity of purpose and resolve that the terrorist attacks have generated by strengthening the cooperation and coordination among our countries. The terrorists and their supporters should be exposed for what they are: fringe elements undeserving of a respectable place in the comity of nations. Our strategies therefore should be informed, consistent and focused.

In some respects, the grave challenges that we face today also offer new possibilities for cooperation previously unimaginable. Our Organization has not only pursued the goal of international peace and security, but it has also served as a focal point for the promotion of other important agendas, particularly in the areas of socio-economic development, the rule of law, good governance and respect for human rights. These goals, which reflect the aspirations of Member States to build a new world free of conflict, prejudice, discrimination and oppression, must remain the enduring preoccupation of our common enterprise. For this, we have a clear compass, not only in the Charter of our Organization, but also in the solemn commitment of our leaders, as reflected in the Millennium Declaration. Let us strive to translate these commitments into practical policies for the benefit of our peoples.

My country's long-standing commitment to fostering the objectives of the United Nations in the area of conflict prevention, peace and stability is well known. It is regrettable that conflicts and wars continue to be waged in many parts of the world. It is particularly disheartening that Africa has had a disproportionate share of these conflicts and wars, with devastating impact on our societies and peoples. Yet, amid the apparent gloom, we see a flicker of hope. The process of peace and stability in Sierra Leone is gaining momentum, as the process of reconciliation, through a programme of disarmament, demobilization and rehabilitation, funded by the United Nations, has continued to generate trust and confidence. We are equally encouraged by recent developments in Burundi, where a newly installed interim transitional Government is grappling with the challenges of national reconciliation and integration. These efforts attest to the determination of leaders in our continent to make a success of initiatives for peace. Nigeria is proud to be associated with these efforts. Our experience in Liberia and Sierra Leone has reinforced our conviction that, working in close partnership with regional and subregional organizations, the United Nations can facilitate the return to peace and security in conflict areas. Let us provide these organizations with the necessary financial and logistic support.

Apart from the commitment to durable peace and security, there must be a re-intensification of our resolve to eliminate weapons of war, both conventional and non-conventional. Of the utmost concern to us in Africa is the havoc caused by the proliferation of small arms and light weapons. The Programme of Action adopted at the recently concluded United Nations Conference on Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects provides us with a clear road map for effective cooperation. Its effective implementation will attest to our commitment to strengthen the forces of democracy and the rule of law in the world.

We recognize the inexorable march of globalization and fully embrace the challenges of expanding opportunities in trade, finance, information

and communications technology which it offers. But the benefits should not be limited to only a small section of the international community. Globalization and the twin phenomena of liberalization and deregulation should work for all countries. The health and stability of the global economic system demand nothing less. For us in Africa, access to such benefits should be reflected in concrete actions and measures that will ensure our full integration into a new and fair global economic system.

Nigeria's call for a fundamental change in current debt strategies towards developing countries is derived from a keen appreciation of the impact external debt has on the economic growth and political stability of developing countries. The fact that, in spite of welcome initiatives on debt relief and debt management, many of our countries have neither grown out of debt nor been able significantly to service their debts in a sustainable manner, warrants a bolder and more imaginative approach, such as outright debt cancellation.

International efforts to resolve the debt problem should be bolstered by collective action to discourage the illegal transfer of funds from developing countries and the repatriation of such funds to the countries of origin. African leaders have established a clear linkage between our huge debt burden, the activities of foreign collaborators and the transfer of funds by former leaders and other individuals from our continent. We are concerned about the corrosive impact of corruption on our fledgling democracies and our social, economic and political development. Let us redouble our efforts to support an international instrument on the illegal transfer of funds abroad.

At the thirty-seventh regular session of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), which took place in Lusaka in July, the leaders of the continent endorsed the New African Initiative, now called the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). The inaugural meeting of the Implementation Committee of Heads of State and Government on NEPAD took place in Abuja on 23 October 2001. Based on a common vision and shared conviction about the need to urgently eradicate poverty and place African countries on the path to sustainable growth and development, NEPAD has, among its key themes, the promotion of peace, democracy, human rights, social and economic management, regional cooperation and economic integration. We appreciate the support already offered, and we sincerely believe that this provides the best platform for a viable partnership with our development partners.

The HIV/AIDS pandemic continues to pose serious challenges to development in our world. We appreciate the contribution of the international community in combating that scourge, as reflected in the outcome of the special session on HIV/AIDS. Africa's resolve to meet the pandemic head-on has struck a responsive chord, and we are grateful to the United Nations Secretary-General for his clear advocacy. I believe that we have reason to be encouraged by the progress made in establishing structures and a multilateral framework for greater cooperation and support in confronting the problem. Every effort should be made to ensure that the Global AIDS and Health Fund becomes operational by January 2002. Meanwhile, we should maintain the momentum so that in the shortest possible time we bring succour to those who live with AIDS or suffer from tuberculosis or other related infectious diseases. This is the expectation of the African leaders who met in Abuja in April this year to agree on a coordinated strategy on this health and development crisis. Our attention should also be focused on the campaign against malaria, as a follow-up to an earlier summit, which also took place in Abuja.

The rescheduling of the United Nations special session on the rights of the child to May 2002 should provide us with an opportunity to ponder the challenges which the world's children face today. For us in Nigeria, the session will coincide with the passage of far-reaching legislation, now before the National Assembly, to protect our children, and go beyond the provisions of the OAU African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, which we have recently ratified, to revolutionize public awareness and the defence of their rights. Indeed, in mid-2002, Nigeria proposes to host an international conference that will, inter alia, address the issue of trafficking in children in our region. We look forward to the participation of Member States.

I cannot conclude without reference to the question of the reform of the United Nations system. Nigeria maintains that, in order for the United Nations to meet the complex challenges of our new century, long-overdue reforms of the Organization must be speedily undertaken. The reform of the Security Council, in particular, constitutes one of the major

challenges facing the United Nations today. Let us work assiduously to complete the reform process and thereby make the enlarged and expanded Council truly representative of the United Nations membership.

May I express our profound gratitude to Secretary-General Kofi Annan for his leadership of our Organization in the past year. Nigeria rejoices with him over his well-deserved re-election, a reward for faithful stewardship and a signal of the trust and confidence of the United Nations membership in his shared vision for the future. No less significant is the award to him and to our Organization of the Nobel Peace Prize for 2001. We wish him well and heartily congratulate the United Nations on that achievement.

I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Souef Mohamed El-Amine, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Comoros.

Mr. El-Amine (Comoros) (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the Comorian delegation, which I have the honour to lead, and on my own behalf, I offer you, Sir, our warmest congratulations on your election to the presidency of the General Assembly at this session. We express the ardent hope that our work, under your enlightened leadership, will be successful.

My delegation and I pay a ringing tribute to your predecessor, Mr. Harri Holkeri, for the excellent manner in which he led the work of the previous session. As to our Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, I praise the merits of that man of such great talent and exemplary wisdom, and I also pay tribute to his dedication to the service of our world Organization. The Nobel Peace Prize that was awarded to him, together with our Organization, is concrete proof of his outstanding values.

On 11 September, the entire world was plunged into gloom and anarchy. Terrorist networks defied the entire international community through their reprehensible attacks on American interests here in New York, this global, hospitable and cosmopolitan city — this capital of the entire world.

Thus, I cannot fail in my duty to convey, from this rostrum, the deep sympathy and compassion of the Government and people of the Comoros to the American people and Government following those painful, tragic and most unfortunate events. We offer our most grief-stricken condolences in particular to the families of the victims, whose terrible pain we share following these sudden deaths.

Furthermore, we were deeply moved by the loss of lives in the aeroplane accident that took place last Monday here in New York. We extend our sincere condolences to the Governments and peoples of the United States and the Dominican Republic and to the bereaved families.

In the course of the previous session and of the Millennium Summit, the central role that has been and must continue to be played by our Organization was broadly reaffirmed in many statements. The reform of the main organ responsible for international peace and security to make it reflect the realities of today's world was seen by all to be a priority. Today more than ever before, that role must be strengthened, because the United Nations responsibility requires it to be better equipped fully and effectively to assume it.

In this respect, it is appropriate to point out that this responsibility is of a different order. Above and all, it is the responsibility "to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war", to cite the expression of the Charter that governs our institution. This primary responsibility requires the Organization to ensure the peace and security of peoples. Today, crises of all sorts and the precariousness of the cause of peace in many regions demonstrate the United Nations highly difficult task in assuming that responsibility. The varied threats to peace that are spreading throughout the world call on us to focus greater attention on taking urgent international action, for no continent is safe from the danger.

Terrorism is one component of that danger. We must not allow extremist groups, regardless of their pretexts, to plunge the world into perpetual psychosis and to claim millions of innocents as their unfortunate victims. The attacks of 11 September were a harsh blow for all of us, a challenge to all mankind. The Islamic Federal Republic of the Comoros therefore strongly condemned those hateful and barbarous acts, just as it condemns terrorism in all its forms.

Thus, in the framework of mobilizing efforts to combat terrorism, the conferences held in Doha and Dakar last month, in which the Government of the Comoros played an active role, reified the commitment of the Arab world and the African continent to this difficult but necessary struggle. In the same way, the meeting in Brussels brought the countries of Europe

together in a manifestation of the continent's abiding concern over terrorism.

In this approach, however, it is first necessary to define the notion of terrorism by clearly establishing what constitutes State, group and individual terrorism. We must then distinguish between terrorist acts and the legitimate claims of certain peoples to their right to self-determination, which indubitably cannot be exercised without confrontation, since it is often met with resistance and even oppression. Finally, it is essential that we in no way confuse terrorism with Islam, since we know, on the one hand, that every terrorist act is the expression of an extremism that is by no means linked to a given religion or nation, and that, on the other, Islam is known for its great tolerance and openness, advocating love of one's fellow man, peace and solidarity.

With respect to my country, the Islamic Federal Republic of the Comoros, the concern of our highest authorities vis-à-vis this problem has led them to establish a national mechanism to combat terrorism, which has been placed under the leadership of the Prime Minister. In January 2000, my country also signed the International Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism. In addition to such national commitments on the part of every one of our countries, it is clear that we will need to engage in international action by joining regional and continental forces to fight this scourge, which threatens world peace and destabilizes the economies of our countries.

This requires an objective political reading of the situation prevailing in areas of tension throughout the world. From that perspective, the situation in the occupied Arab territories, among other problems, calls for our attention today. The Palestinian people has the same right as every other nation on Earth to life, happiness, prosperity, peace and security. That is why, in respect for the law and in order to reach a just, lasting and definitive solution to this problem, the Comorian Government believes that an independent Palestinian State, with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital, is necessary. From another point of view, the United Nations has the responsibility to safeguard the welfare of peoples. That entails guaranteeing the conditions for a better life by protecting fundamental human rights.

Indeed, the serious diseases affecting our countries, in particular the developing ones; difficult access to better education and health care; the famine that afflicts several regions of the world; the deterioration of our environment; and the violation of human rights remain the major challenges to our millennium. Some of these evils, such as famine, serious disease and the extreme poverty afflicting many countries, are in themselves very eloquent manifestations of a gap between North and South that we will ultimately have to bridge.

As to disease, AIDS is at the heart of our discussions and concerns, because it kills, empties entire regions and every year creates millions of orphans whose future is bleak. Thus, in the Islamic Federal Republic of the Comoros, despite a relatively low rate of incidence, the Government remains aware that the country's geographical position and the prevalence of tourism in our island subregion are factors that could contribute to the rapid spread of the disease, given the influx of tourists and seasonal holiday-makers.

That is why our Government is devoted to making the national programme against AIDS a useful tool by giving it, as much as possible, the appropriate means, with the undeniable help of the World Health Organization and Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS). The commitment of the Government of Comoros to this fight against AIDS is also expressed by its participation in all regional or international measures to this effect. Thus, a delegation from Comoros, led by His Excellency Mr. Hamada Madi Boléro, the Prime Minister, took part last June in the special session of the General Assembly on AIDS, held in this city. The recommendations from that session were borne in mind by our national authorities.

Speaking of diseases, I should not overlook malaria, which still affects many regions. In Comoros, it affects all layers of society and becomes a source of major concern for the national authorities. This is why, beyond the national provisions within the framework of the national strategy to fight malaria, my country welcomes the initiative to proclaim the period 2001-2010 the Decade to Roll Back Malaria in Africa.

I spoke earlier about the gap that separates economies of the North from those of the South. From this point of view, the Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries, held in Brussels in May 2001, is of particular interest for our countries, and we count on more resolute commitment

from all of us, rich and poor countries, so that the recommendations made on that occasion and those that will be adopted within the framework of the conference that is currently being held in Doha, in Qatar, will lead to positive changes and lay a solid basis for sustainable and effective development by revitalizing our economies.

Our peoples expect much from our Organization, recognized as offering the best framework to guarantee the fundamental rights of all. This is why, confident in the United Nations to ensure the respect for unity and territorial integrity of our respective countries, the Islamic Federal Republic of the Comoros urges our Organization to consider the legitimate claim of the Chinese Government with respect to the reintegration of the Chinese province of Taiwan in its natural entity. My country, especially sensitive to this problem, as we ourselves have had a painful secessionist experience, believes firmly in the need to find swift solutions to this type of situation, which could undermine the stability of regions.

The Millennium Summit prompted great hopes, which we must turn into reality, in order to thus recognize all the importance that it has in the eyes of humanity. This means that there should be a follow-up of the recommendations made on this occasion. We can only strongly wish that everyone will take due account of the true diagnosis made of our world in order to seek together the appropriate remedies.

Everyone's interest and survival depends on this, because when our neighbour's peace is threatened, no one is safe; likewise, as long as hunger, disease, ignorance, violence, injustice and poverty still subsist in certain regions, they will be a cause of shame for all humanity and a potential threat to peace and stability.

A year after the last session, during which I spoke from this high rostrum on, among other points, the general situation that prevailed in my country, the Islamic Federal Republic of the Comoros, I would like to speak about certain aspects of the way the situation is evolving. I am pleased to announce today that the process of national reconciliation, led by the Head of State of my country, His Excellency Colonel Azali Assoumani, in which he opted for direct dialogue with our brothers from the island of Anjouan, is making progress daily.

Indeed, at the present time, a draft constitution, which would govern the future of the whole of the Comoros, has just been handed to the Head of State and will be submitted to a referendum before the end of this year. All of the political parties took part in drafting this document, and we also benefited from the assistance of the entire international community, including the Organization of African Unity, the Organization of la Francophonie and the League of Arab States with respect to expertise in constitutional law.

Alongside these efforts, provisions are being made to prepare the upcoming elections, for which the international community, through the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the European Union, will also provide considerable technical assistance.

In this transitional phase towards the establishment of new institutions, the Government of Comoros is not sparing any effort to improve the current conditions in order to allow our population to lead a decent and acceptable life. These significant efforts must of course be supported by the international community in order to help the social sectors in difficulty. The great challenge for our Government, in addition to this reconstruction now under way, remains the achievement of harmonious social and economic development.

This is why, on behalf of the Government of Comoros, I launch an urgent appeal to the entire international community to continue to provide its valuable support in this period of national reconciliation for the reconstruction and establishment of institutions.

The secessionist crisis did not make us lose sight of the problem of the Comoran island of Mayotte, which is a major concern for the people and Government of my country. This island of Comoros, administered by France, is completely cut off from the rest of the archipelago, thus limiting the free movement of people and goods among islands and leading to considerable human loss for people who want to reach their families in Mayotte.

While the Government of Comoros is confident of the willingness of the French authorities to cooperate fully with their Comoran counterparts in order to find a lasting and negotiated solution to the problem of the Comoran island of Mayotte, we reiterate our desire to see the international community take part in this approach, out of respect for the law

and in accordance with the relevant resolutions of the United Nations that admitted Comoros to the United Nations, once the new Comoran entity is set up to allow the return of Mayotte to its natural fold.

Lastly, I would like to extend our profound and sincere thanks to our fraternal countries and friends, to the partners of Comoros that accompanied us in every way they could, in the search for a lasting solution to the crisis that has shaken our country and is still present in our struggle to preserve and perpetuate the precious gains that we have made from the change of 30 April 1999. May all the crises that are affecting the world today see a fortunate conclusion in the interest of our peoples.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. João Bernardo de Miranda, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Angola.

Mr. de Miranda (Angola) (*spoke in Portuguese; English text provided by the delegation*): Allow me to start by congratulating you, Mr. President, on behalf of my Government and myself, on your election to the presidency of the United Nations General Assembly.

Your election is an acknowledgement of the many contributions made by the Republic of Korea to United Nations efforts to maintain international peace and security, as well as to promote the economic and social development of our peoples.

This session is being held during a period of major challenges to our Organization and the international community in general.

Peace and security continue to be endangered by many armed conflicts, particularly in Africa, as well as by terrorist activities launched systematically or sporadically against some countries. Extreme poverty and misery still affect large numbers of the world population, especially in my continent, where one fourth of our 800 million inhabitants survive on less than $1 per day. The HIV/AIDS epidemic, now affecting more than 36 million people, most of them economically active people, may seriously threaten the economic development and future of many societies unless urgent measures are taken.

To face these and many other challenges, the United Nations must continue to improve its internal structure, including the Security Council, whose membership must be reconsidered to allow for a more equitable geographic balance. In addition, its working methods should be restructured to ensure effective implementation of its decisions.

The United Nations must also endeavour to implement the action plans and recommendations adopted over the last decade, with a view to resolving problems in the areas of HIV/AIDS, social development, human rights, racism and racial discrimination, as well as terrorism.

At the last session of the General Assembly, my Government voted in favour of resolution 55/158, on measures to eliminate international terrorism. We continue to believe that its implementation will be essential to fighting this enemy. Terrorism is an international scourge with many faces. No country is immune to this heinous evil, and to fight it, we must cooperate at the bilateral, regional and international levels, under the leadership of the United Nations.

Angola reiterates its firm condemnation of the 11 September terrorist attacks, which victimized thousands of innocent civilians and endorses the use of force to eliminate terrorist networks and their support bases.

Having been subjected to terrorism for many years, Angola is pleased to join all other States in this anti-terrorist campaign. In this context, we have joined the other members of the Southern Africa Development Council to promote a forum to discus and identify the many faces of terrorism, as well as effective means to prevent and fight its activities in and from our region.

As to the African continent, we believe measures to combat terrorism should particularly address its sources of financing, such as the illicit diamond, drug and weapons traffic, and identify its networks in order to prevent the free circulation of its members.

In partnership with some countries, Angola has developed an international diamond certification system that has prevented diamonds originating from illegal traffic to reach international markets. Thus, we have helped prevent the financing of terrorist groups and their activities in many countries of our continent.

At this stage, the struggle against terrorism requires that, beyond the measures encompassed by Security Council resolution 1373 (2001), special attention be devoted to the completion of an international convention against terrorism. This legal instrument could eliminate some of the ambiguities still surrounding the definition of this phenomenon.

My Government is firmly committed to peace in Angola, the African continent and the world as a whole. After a period of uncertainty, peace is slowly becoming an irreversible reality in Angola. The regular forces of UNITA's militarist wing, which had launched a large-scale military campaign to seize power, have been completely neutralized. Counties under their illegal control have been liberated and the Angolan Government now controls the entire national territory.

Large numbers of rebel soldiers and officers surrendering their weapons and being integrated into Angolan society is now a daily event. Today UNITA's military wing has only small groups, inadequately armed in the jungle or in remote areas of our large territory. Although they can make isolated armed attacks, they do not represent a threat anymore to Angolan democratic institutions or to the safety of most of our population.

My Government believes that the Lusaka Protocol continues to be a valid formula for resolving problems related to peace and national reconciliation in Angola.

The climate of peace that is starting to prevail is having favourable repercussions on the country's economy. Although considerable distortions and weaknesses still exist, reform efforts under way can help overcome serious social problems and enable general elections to be held in the near future in a truly democratic environment.

As a result of a long period of war, Angola still needs the support of the international community in its effort to alleviate the problems of poverty, displaced persons and refugees, and to rebuild its infrastructure.

The environment of relative peace would not be possible without the help of the international community, which has made the distinction between those who are committed to peace and democracy and the proponents of war, and has imposed Security Council sanctions against UNITA's militarist wing led by Jonas Savimbi. The most visible effect of these sanctions has been their contribution to a significant reduction of Savimbi's capacity to wage war and, as a result, to persuade a great number of UNITA members to give up their weapons and join the peace effort.

That outcome clearly demonstrates the efficacy of the sanctions as a means, and not as an end in themselves. That is why my Government favours keeping and tightening them until peace becomes irreversible in Angola. Nevertheless, my Government is still concerned with the findings of United Nations reports, according to which not all countries have fully adopted measures called for by the sanctions resolutions.

The Security Council resolutions on sanctions against UNITA were adopted in accordance with the powers given to the Council by the United Nations Charter. All nations are legally obligated to abide by and implement those resolutions. The resulting obligations on the Member States prevail over any inconsistent obligation to which they might be subject by virtue of any other treaty or international agreement to which they are, or may become, party. That principle should also be applied with regard to sanctions against UNITA.

The Angolan Government considers inconsistent the arguments put forward by certain Governments — some of which have a privileged relationship with Angola — of a supposed incompatibility between their internal legislation and Security Council resolutions. We appeal to those countries to reverse their position and to take the measures required. This, we believe, will contribute to the development of harmonious bilateral relationships with Angola.

Angola is firmly committed to a search for peace in the Great Lakes region, and particularly in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We are pleased with the positive results achieved lately by the peace process. In general terms, the ceasefire has been adhered to and foreign troops have been withdrawn. Angola, for example, has withdrawn 75 per cent of its troops. Namibia has completed its withdrawal, and both Zimbabwe and Uganda have started to repatriate their respective armies. Only Rwanda has not yet taken any step to signal its willingness to withdraw its forces, and therefore to fulfil its basic obligation as a signatory to the Lusaka Agreement and the obligations of the pertinent resolutions of the Security Council. We are hopeful that proper preparation of the inter-Congolese dialogue will lead to a substantive discussion of the relevant questions regarding the political future of the country.

As regards Burundi, Angola salutes the establishment of a transitional Government, which is a direct outcome of the Pretoria agreement, for which the mediation efforts of former President Nelson Mandela

were so crucial. We hope this step will soon lead to peace and stability in Burundi and good-neighbourly relations with bordering countries.

With regard to Western Sahara, Angola thinks it is necessary to find a solution acceptable to both parties that makes it possible to overcome the barriers to the implementation of a plan to resolve the conflict. My Government encourages the United Nations and the Organization of African Unity (OAU) to persist in their efforts in that direction.

The international community should not forget the problems of Somalia. The establishment of a Transitional National Government is an important step on the way to a peaceful resolution of the internal conflict there. Both the United Nations and the OAU should support that step in order that Somalia can return to its rightful place in the community of nations.

Angola is also concerned with the deterioration of the peace process in the Middle East, which has resulted from the recent intensification of the violence. We believe that a resolution of the conflict between Israel and Palestine will require negotiations. We therefore appeal to the parties to continue their dialogue and to abide by the agreements they signed and by the relevant resolutions of the Security Council.

Angola is pleased with the advances achieved by the fraternal people of East Timor in their struggle for the right to self-determination and independence. The political, moral and diplomatic support that Angola and other members of the international community have been providing through the years in major international forums was decisive in enabling the people of the territory to reach a point where they can finally choose their destiny in freedom. The Timorese are now preparing to proclaim the birth of a new, independent, sovereign and democratic nation, but they will continue to need the support of the United Nations for the consolidation of their institutions.

The international economic recession will have a major impact on developing countries, and on Africa in particular, which has already suffered the effects of globalization. Of course, African countries cannot avoid globalization. But to engage in cooperative and collective activities, African nations must be based in strong States, something that hardly exists in the continent.

In the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), the countries of the continent have found a way to break away from stagnation and to promote inter-African cooperation and achieve development. Angola is engaged in the New Partnership. Economic progress can be achieved in Africa through the promotion of trade among its nations, the establishment of healthy economic conditions and good governance, fighting regional threats — including conflicts and endemic diseases — and welcoming capital inflows. We hope that NEPAD will become a force for political stabilization and economic development in African countries, particularly those affected by serious divisions.

The International Conference on Financing for Development, to be held in Monterrey, Mexico, must be an opportunity to mobilize resources for development, particularly for the 49 least developed countries, 34 of which are in Africa, and to alleviate the extreme poverty under which more than 600 million people are now living.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Mustafa Osman Ismail, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Sudan.

Mr. Osman (Sudan) *(spoke in Arabic)*: Allow me to extend, on behalf of the people and Government of the Sudan, our heartfelt condolences to the Government and people of the Dominican Republic and to the families of the victims of the tragic American Airlines crash that took place earlier this week.

We would also like to express our condolences to the brotherly people of Algeria, who recently suffered sweeping floods in their country.

At the outset, I would like to express to you, Mr. President, our warm congratulations on your election as President of the fifty-sixth session of the General Assembly. We are pleased to assure you of our confidence in your ability to lead our work to success.

We would also like to express our gratitude to Mr. Harri Holkeri for the able and efficient way in which he discharged the presidency during the last session.

I would also like to salute Mr. Kofi Annan, Secretary-General of the United Nations, and extend to him our warm congratulations on his re-election to head the Organization for a second term. I am pleased to congratulate him once again on winning the Nobel

Peace Prize. We are confident that he will continue in his untiring efforts to lead the Organization towards its noble objectives of achieving a better tomorrow for humanity.

This session is being held at a time of extremely complex developments in the wake of the tragic terrorist acts that took place in New York and Washington, D.C. From this podium, I would like to reaffirm Sudan's condemnation and denunciation of terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. We would like to express once again our sincere condolences to the Government of the United States and to the families of the victims.

The Sudan calls upon the Organization to rise to the onerous challenges, heavy burdens and subsequent repercussions of these events. This will require a coordinated and collective international effort to combat terrorism and uproot its causes and sources under the authority of international legitimacy. In this context, we must differentiate between good and evil — we must avoid putting both in one basket. We should not confuse the issues, because if we do, good might be transformed into evil.

I would like to take this opportunity to emphasize Sudan's readiness to continue to participate in and contribute to this effort. Sudan has ranked first among Member States that have ratified or acceded to international conventions on terrorism. At the regional level, Sudan was among the first countries to ratify the Arab Convention on the Suppression of Terrorism. It has also ratified the Convention of the Organization of the Islamic Conference on Combating International Terrorism. We are in the process of ratifying the Convention of the Organization of African Unity on the Prevention and Combating of Terrorism. At the national level, we have adopted a law to fight terrorism. Through these measures, my country is helping to build a proper and sound foundation for combating and uprooting international terrorism in accordance with international legitimacy.

I would like to join those who preceded me by saying that terrorism does not belong to a particular religion, nationality, or ethnic group. It is an international phenomenon. Therefore, we must coordinate our efforts internationally to uproot it. We deplore efforts in some circles to link terrorism with Islam in cheap attempt to sow discord among the followers of divine religions and to portray the issue as a clash between cultures and civilizations. Islam is a religion of peace and tolerance, and as such is far from having any connection to terrorism.

The proceedings of this session could not have come at a more opportune moment for us in the Sudan. We reaped the benefit of our common efforts supported by our brothers and friends to lift the sanctions that have been imposed on the Sudan by the Security Council since 1996. This will contribute to Sudan's further cooperation with the international community. In this context, the Sudan calls upon the Security Council to pursue this objective policy and review the sanctions it has imposed on a number of countries, including Libya and Iraq.

Mr. Dudău (Republic of Moldova), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The Sudan also calls upon the Security Council to dispatch a fact-finding mission in connection with the Alshifa pharmaceutical factory in the Sudan, which was destroyed by American missiles in August 1998. We believe that the bombardment of this factory was a flagrant mistake committed by the former American administration. It is a mistake that should be recognized and corrected, which would allow Member States and peoples of the world to regain confidence in the Organization and help remove a source of grievance and injustice. Thus the people of the world could live together in a world of justice, equality, security and peace.

The delegation of the Sudan believes that now is the time to end the unilateral coercive economic measures imposed on certain countries, including the Sudan, which have negative effects on many sectors of our population, particularly women and children.

We in the Sudan look forward to a new era in our relations with the Organization following the lifting of the sanctions imposed on our country. We are pleased to confirm that we will endeavour to make every possible moral and intellectual effort to support the activities of the Organization that promote the well-being of humanity. We also anticipate that the Organization will play an effective role and make a new contribution towards assisting the Sudan in the implementation of its national development programmes, including the eradication of poverty and the rehabilitation of areas destroyed by war.

The Sudan, as the current Chair of two African regional organizations, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development and the Community of Sahelo-Saharan States, would like once again to recall the historic Declaration adopted by the Millennium Summit so as to confront the challenges faced at all levels by the international community in the twenty-first century. The Sudan hopes this Declaration will be translated into real and tangible action aimed at achieving justice and equality and the full participation of all Member States in the creation of a better tomorrow where human beings will be liberated from fear, poverty and destitution.

For us to realize our aspirations, this session should give special attention to reforming the Organization's organs, since they are the mechanisms through which the international community coordinates plans to realize international peace and security, comprehensive development and prosperity for all humanity. The Security Council tops the list of these organs. Member States have been calling for an expansion of its membership in the permanent and non-permanent categories, so that it will be more representative of the current United Nations membership. They have also called for improvement in its working methods and decision-making process, which should be more democratic and transparent.

The General Assembly should be enabled to carry out its role as enshrined in the United Nations Charter with respect to maintaining international peace and security, and should also exercise its duty to hold other organs of the Organization accountable.

We should like to emphasize the need to revitalize the role of the Economic and Social Council, considering that it is the forum that sets out international development policies. Its resolutions should be linked more to economic and social aspects than to political ones. The Council should be guided by the decisions adopted at the Vienna Conference, which considered the right to development an inalienable human right.

All countries that participated in the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, held in Durban, South Africa, unanimously confirmed their utmost determination to eradicate all forms of racism and xenophobia and to address their root causes in order to achieve justice and fairness for all peoples who have suffered and continue to suffer from the scourge of these heinous practices. The Sudan supported the implementation of recommendations from the Durban Conference, including those of the Group of eminent persons.

With regard to the deteriorating situation in the Middle East, the Sudan expresses its deep concern at the stalemate in the peace process and reaffirms the need for total Israeli withdrawal from the occupied Arab territories in accordance with United Nations resolutions. This will enable the Palestinian people to regain its sovereignty over its territories and establish its independent State with holy Jerusalem as its capital, and allow sisterly Syria and Lebanon to restore their sovereignty over all their occupied territories.

The Sudan also reiterates its deep concern for the negative humanitarian impacts of the current military operations in Afghanistan on the civilian population. We welcome and support the mission of the Secretary-General's representative, Lakhdar Brahimi, to bring peace and stability to Afghanistan.

With regard to Somalia, where the tragedies of the long-standing war spread negative effects to the whole region of the Horn of Africa, the Sudan delegation calls upon all Somali parties to respond to the voice of reason and complete national reconciliation in Somalia, allowing Somalia to fulfil its regional and international role.

By the decision adopted at the eighth Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) Summit in Khartoum last November, the Sudan was mandated, together with neighbouring countries, to complete the national reconciliation efforts in coordination with Somalia's Transitional Government. In conformity with this mandate to restore stability in Somalia, the President of the Republic of the Sudan, Omer Hassan Ahmed Al-Bashir, current Chairman of IGAD, has appointed a special envoy for peace in that sisterly country. The special envoy is engaged in intensive contacts with the countries of the subregion, the Transitional Government in Somalia, the different Somali factions and the IGAD secretariat. From this podium, the delegation of the Sudan calls upon the United Nations and the international community to support the efforts to restore security, stability and infrastructure in Somalia, so that the Government will be able to fulfil its commitments and establish peace and stability in the country.

We understand the concern of the international community over the continuation of the war in the southern Sudan. I would like to bring to the Assembly's attention the position of the Government of the Sudan with a view to ending the war and achieving peace through the following steps: an immediate, supervised and total ceasefire; regular access to humanitarian assistance for the population in need; negotiations on a political solution to the problem; and the reconstruction of the areas affected by the war.

The ninth IGAD Summit is to be held in Khartoum in January of next year. We hope that the questions of the Sudan and Somalia will be given the importance they deserve so that leaders will come away with a clear vision of how to end the war and restore peace in this sensitive region of the world.

In this context, I would like to refer to the statement of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Sudan before the Third Committee last week. He stated that the war in the Sudan is not a religious war, as is repeatedly alleged by some circles wishing to distort the truth.

I would like to take this opportunity to commend the Arab Republic of Egypt and the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya for their joint initiative for peace and reconciliation in the Sudan. I would also like to pay tribute to IGAD member States for their initiative to stop the war in the Sudan and the genuine efforts to restore peace in my country. The Government of the Sudan will continue its commitment to cooperating with the United Nations, donor countries and humanitarian organizations in order to facilitate the delivery of humanitarian assistance to the victims of the war.

With regard to economics, the Government has maintained and enhanced reform and liberalization programmes and has introduced measures and incentives to promote local and foreign private investment. The Sudan has now succeeded in normalizing its relations with regional and international financial institutions. A positive sign of this is an increase in local investments and steady flows of foreign investment to the Sudan.

We are mindful of the accelerated pace of globalization in the domain of international law, especially in the field of criminal liability and bringing before international criminal authorities individuals charged with committing heinous crimes prohibited by international law.

In this connection, we believe it is imperative that all States and individuals should stand as equals before international law. The avoidance of double standards is a true safeguard against the distortion of international justice and ensures that it stays on the right path. We have made considerable effort in the past few years, in coordination with many countries of the world, to guarantee the faithful application of these standards and noble principles. To this end, the Sudan chose to follow words with deeds by quickly signing the Rome Statute establishing the International Criminal Court.

International cooperation on disarmament should be based on commitment and adherence to international law and the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter, including the sovereign equality of States, territorial integrity, the peaceful settlement of disputes, non-interference in the internal affairs of other States and the legitimate right of States to self-defence.

In conclusion, I would like to invite the Assembly to reaffirm the political will required to achieve international peace and security. I call upon all to adopt concrete measures ensuring that globalization becomes a positive engine of progress; that its advantages and benefits are shared by humanity at large, not restricted to a minority; and that globalization does not lead to cultural and intellectual hegemony and is not used as a means of political and economic pressure. If that happened, it would undoubtedly result in widening the development gap and the clash between the different cultures of the North and the South.

Let us all join together in a new era of international relations based on the rejection of conflicts and confrontation, on mutual respect and non-interference in the internal affairs of others. To this end, I would like to reaffirm the Sudan's commitment and pledge to cooperate with the international community to move forward in realizing the common aspirations of all humanity.

The Acting President: I call on His Excellency Mr. Abdullah Alsaidi, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Yemen.

Mr. Alsaidi (Yemen) (*spoke in Arabic*): I am pleased, first of all, to convey through you, Sir, our sincere congratulations to President Han Seung-soo on

his election as President of the current session of the General Assembly. I am certain that with his expertise and skill he will conduct the proceedings of this session successfully. I should also like to express our appreciation to your predecessor, Mr. Harri Holkeri, for the distinction with which he conducted the proceedings of the last session.

Our current meetings are convened amid extraordinary circumstances arising from the acts of terrorism committed against the United States of America on the very day set for the opening of this session. It is regrettable that the first session of the United Nations General Assembly of the twenty-first century should be convened in the aftermath of those alarming events. These events truly constitute a negative phenomenon that will have major repercussions on inter-State relations at the bilateral and multilateral levels alike. Furthermore, these events have convinced everyone that there is no alternative to collective endeavour through legitimate structures to confront the challenges of the future. We would like to stress the necessity of supporting the United Nations as an ideal framework for international cooperation, particularly at this stage when collective endeavour is indispensable for coping with the problems that now, in the era of globalization, affect us all to a greater or lesser extent. In this connection, we congratulate the United Nations and its Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, on receiving the Nobel Peace Prize for 2001, which has come at an appropriate time as an appreciative expression of the role of the Organization and the effective leadership of its Secretary-General.

The perseverance of the host country in ensuring quasi-normal conditions for the work of this session reflects a will to transcend the catastrophe and displays confidence in the triumph of reason. Permit me, as I stand at the heart of this great and wounded city, to convey, on behalf of the leadership, Government and people of Yemen, our sincere condolences and deepest sympathy to the American President, the Government and people of the United States, and to convey these sentiments in particular to the families of the innocent victims whose lives were lost in the tragic events of 11 September.

Although the scourge of terrorism has struck the United States this time, claiming thousands of innocent victims, the phenomenon of terrorism is not new. Indeed, it is directed against the whole world. These recent acts of terrorism claimed victims from 70 foreign countries, including Yemen. These acts were not targeted against the United States and Americans alone; rather, the target was international peace and security. Regrettably, the phenomenon of terrorism has worsened because of negligence in confronting it. We in the Republic of Yemen have not been spared the perils and threats of terrorism. Our country has been scorched by its fire and afflicted in many ways, but our appeals for timely, effective cooperation fell on deaf ears.

Today, in the face of this loathsome act of terrorism, the Republic of Yemen reiterates its stand, condemning terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, whatever its causes and sources. As we proclaim the readiness of the Government of the Republic of Yemen to strive, within the framework of international legitimacy, for the elimination of terrorism, we also affirm our desire that those endeavours not lead to the suffering of innocent persons or to the practice of oppression that will result in the emergence of a new generation of terrorists.

We also affirm the Arab Islamic position that rejects attempts to link terrorism to Arabs and Muslims. Terrorism, as history teaches us, has no religion, no homeland and no identity. On the same grounds, Yemen censures the voices that stir up propaganda for a clash of civilizations or, to be precise, a clash of Islam with Christianity. Instead, we call for a meaningful intercultural dialogue and for the creation of common concepts centred on justice, human and religious values.

The desire to combat and eliminate terrorism makes it incumbent upon the international community to launch an unremitting campaign based on uniform and clearly defined criteria identifying terrorists, be they individuals, or collective or State terrorism. The international community cannot shirk its responsibility to oppose State terrorism — just as it opposes terrorism by individuals and groups.

Logically, it follows that the Security Council should put an end to the crimes committed daily by Israel against the Palestinian people forcing Israel to withdraw from the occupied Arab territories and to implement the resolutions of international legitimacy, first and foremost of which are Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). In this regard, the Republic of Yemen proclaims that it welcomes President George W. Bush's statement on the necessity

of establishing a Palestinian State with all the elements of sovereignty. This declaration has met with ever-increasing international support. Israel must realize that its security is bound up with its neighbour's security and that its secure future lies in the inevitable acceptance of the Palestinian people's right to establish their own independent State and in its respecting the Palestinians' sovereignty over their territory.

Today's world is characterized by rapid transformations that, taken as a whole, are the natural labour pains that precede the birth of a new reality reflecting humankind's yearning for a more just and prosperous world. The current reality and nature of international relations differ from those of the 1990s; in fact, they differ to some extent from the prevailing situation only two months ago, to be precise, prior to the tragic and bloody events of September. These events diverted attention from globalization issues, the furthering of the democratic process and the diffusion of human rights to an endeavour to confront and eliminate terrorism. Everyone is aware that the exigencies of combating and eradicating terrorism demand adherence to democratic decision-making methods. Decisions must be adopted on the basis of agreement and participation, exactly as is required at the national level.

The logic of force has unquestionably become an outdated logic, which can in no way lead to the establishment of sound international relations or ensure lasting solutions to the problems that inevitably arise from time to time in inter-State relations. The Republic of Yemen has striven tirelessly to ensure the best means of achieving peace and stability at the regional and world levels, and has adhered to the course of resolving disputes by peaceful means and by accepting and adhering to the principle of good-neighbourliness.

On this basis, our political leadership, represented by President Ali Abdullah Saleh, has made continuous and unremitting efforts to help end the strife between the warring factions in fraternal Somalia. It hastened to welcome the outcome of the Arta Peace Conference and was among the first to support the provisional national Government, under the leadership of President Salad Hassan, as a legitimate entity representing Somali national consensus.

The ordeal that our Somali brothers are experiencing, both inside and outside the country, confronts the international community with its responsibility to provide aid and support to the provisional Government and to increase assistance to the Somali refugees in neighbouring countries, including our own. Our country has opened its arms to some 150,000 of our Somali brothers, despite the difficult economic circumstances it is currently experiencing.

Recent events have proved beyond doubt that there is an urgent need to amend the rules of international relations so as to ensure consensus in decision-making and collective participation in efforts to confront the growing challenges and dangers that face us all and that are not confined within the borders of any one State. That naturally makes it imperative to reconsider the policy of imposing international embargoes and sanctions that do not represent the collective will nor the required agreements, while the facts affirm their harmfulness and futility.

The sanctions imposed on the Iraqi people and the suffering of that people are a burden on the human conscience, and their continuation raises an increasing number of questions about the truth of the aims behind the insistence on their maintenance, now that the justifications for the decision to impose those sanctions no longer exist: Iraq has committed itself to implementing the United Nations resolutions guaranteeing Kuwait's security and sovereignty over its territory. My country has used its good offices with fraternal Kuwait and Iraq and continues to do so, with a view to finding a solution to the issue of Kuwaiti and other prisoners and missing persons, and cooperating in the settlement of this distressing issue. Here, we would like to express our happiness at the decision taken by the Security Council to lift the sanctions imposed on Sudan.

At a time when fraternal Libya and certain other States are still suffering from unjust embargo policies, there is an urgent need to reconsider those embargo resolutions that have become obsolete and have been overtaken by events.

One cause for optimism is the desire shown by both the United Arab Emirates and Iran, and the current contacts between them, to find a solution to the issue of the three islands of the Emirates in the Arabian Gulf. Yemen welcomes this move by the two fraternal States while wishing to affirm that direct talks or international arbitration are the option that will

preserve the security of the region and strengthen relations between the two countries.

Developing countries are still experiencing extremely difficult economic and social conditions, and the financial sources for national development investment are almost non-existent, since external debt and debt servicing consume most national development earnings. This is evident in the least developed countries, a group to which the Republic of Yemen belongs. In this context, we deem it essential to strive to implement the recommendations of the Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries.

The Republic of Yemen wishes to participate in the preparatory meetings for the International Conference on Financing for Development, to be held next year in Mexico, as it is an international gathering that will address, inter alia, issues related to the mobilization of the financial resources necessary for comprehensive development activities. These include commitment to pay official development assistance pledges, considering the development of ways to increase the domestic resources necessary for development activities and increasing donor assistance, particularly to national plans aimed at eliminating poverty in all its dimensions.

The Government of the Republic of Yemen is following a comprehensive development approach under extremely difficult economic circumstances. Large sums are allocated in the national budget for building the infrastructure, and particular importance is given to multidimensional programmes for the elimination of poverty. An effort is being made to ensure the participation of the various segments of civil society in the process of decision-making for development activities.

Seeking integration into the global economy, the competent authorities in Yemen are endeavouring to fulfil the requirements for joining the World Trade Organization. In this context, the Government has adopted a number of measures related to economic reforms and to finding new markets. However, in that regard there are obstacles facing the Republic of Yemen, as is the case with other least developed countries seeking market integration. An effort must be made to remove these obstacles by allowing access to world markets for Yemen's products and by affording it an opportunity to acquire the technology needed for development, particularly communications and information technology.

The process of globalization, which in its current form has some positive elements, should give due consideration to human needs and not be confined to market interests. Inter-State relations characterized by justice and shared responsibility, as envisioned last year in the Millennium Declaration, should prevail.

With regard to bilateral economic cooperation, my country's delegation would like to express its thanks and appreciation for the contributions of friendly States — in particular Germany, the Netherlands and Japan - that are providing assistance to development plans and programmes in the Republic of Yemen.

The most important trend in the world today is unquestionably the increasing move towards democracy as a necessary requirement for the achievement of equity, justice and social peace. In the Republic of Yemen, the democratic process has been a basis for guaranteeing the unity achieved on 22 May 1990 and has been organically linked to that unity.

In spite of the short time since its achievement of unity and its proclamation of commitment to the democratic process, my country has made major strides towards the achievement of political pluralism, the peaceful transfer of power and the guaranteeing of human rights, especially with regard to the participation of women in the comprehensive development process. The most recent of these achievements were the free direct elections for the presidency of the Republic last year and the local Government elections early this year. Our manifest desire to develop the democratic process led to the convening of the Emerging Democracies Forum in Sana'a last year, which was the first conference of its kind.

Lastly, we would like to express our desire to host the next International Conference of New or Restored Democracies, scheduled to take place in 2003. We hope that our request will be supported. The Conference will provide an opportunity for participants to get to know first-hand the country in the land of Sheba — a country that has practised consultation and democracy since the dawn of civilization.

In conclusion, I hope that our meetings here will result in the promotion of joint endeavours that fulfil

the aspirations of our peoples for a world in which justice triumphs over inequity and poverty and in which peace, rather than fear and war, prevails.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Martin Belinga-Eboutou, Chairman of the delegation of Cameroon.

Mr. Belinga-Eboutou (Cameroon) (*spoke in French*): I should like at the outset to express the profound sympathy and condolences of Cameroon to the Government and the people of the United States of America and of the Dominican Republic for the accident involving the American Airlines Airbus on 12 November in New York.

It was also with great dismay and sadness that we learned of the natural disaster that struck the brotherly people of Algeria with such severity. On behalf of the people and the Government of Cameroon, I would like to extend to that country our most profound condolences and solidarity.

Rarely has a session of the General Assembly been such a focus of international public attention or aroused the interest of the worldwide media to the extent that the current session has. The annual session of the General Assembly is a powerful symbol of the coming together of nations, the promotion of cultures and respect for differences and freedoms. This year, however, a shadow has been cast over our session by the recent, terrible attacks of 11 September, which took place not far from here. Cameroon addressed that subject at length during the debate on international terrorism that took place on 5 October. I should therefore simply like to reaffirm, on behalf of His Excellency Mr. Paul Biya, President of the Republic of Cameroon, our sincere condolences to the families that have suffered as a result of the tragedy, as well as our solidarity with the city of New York and the Government of the United States.

We must, of course, emerge from this period of mourning. We must unite our forces to eliminate the centres of destruction that are responsible for this tragedy. Each of the States Members of the United Nations, acting together, must nip international terrorism in the bud before it spreads any further. Lowering our guard when confronted with this great peril, or appearing to be helpless in the face of the criminal fanatics who are sowing terror, would expose each State and each individual on earth, turning them into potential victims of this lethal danger.

The President of the General Assembly, Mr. Han, comes from Korea, whose patient, wise and resolute peoples have long been engaged in a courageous political struggle to heal the wounds of the past. We are convinced that he will be able to guide the Assembly at its fifty-sixth session through this period of great turbulence. He can rest assured of my delegation's full support.

The delegation of Cameroon would also like to express its gratitude to his predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Harri Holkeri, who presided with great skill over the work of the General Assembly at its fifty-fifth session. He perfectly reflected the modest, generous and supportive character of Finland.

The award of the Nobel Peace Prize to the United Nations and its Secretary-General is cause for hope and optimism for the development of the Organization. Cameroon welcomes that dual tribute. As the head of State of Cameroon said in his message of congratulations to the Secretary-General, Africa is proud that the Oslo jury chose to honour Kofi Annan. That award strengthens and reaffirms the unanimity and confidence of the General Assembly, which presided over the re-election — an election that seemed quite natural — of that great servant of the peoples of the United Nations for a second mandate as Secretary-General of our Organization.

Indeed, all States Members of the United Nations must be proud that the Nobel Peace Prize was also awarded to the Organization. It is the first time in the history of the United Nations that the Organization itself has been honoured with such a distinction. That gesture confirms — if such a confirmation was needed — that the Organization, in which we are all players, is truly a major instrument of world peace that embodies all of our hopes for a better world.

As an instrument of world peace, the United Nations took up, the day after the attacks of 11 September, both the struggle against international terrorism and the crisis in Afghanistan. The international community as a whole, through Security Council and General Assembly resolutions, was able to support the military intervention carried out against the presumed masterminds of those attacks, their networks and their Taliban protectors.

In the same way that we honour the memory of the victims of New York, Washington, D.C., and Pennsylvania, we must also honour the memory of the

civilian victims in Afghanistan, including the three French and German journalists.

Cameroon, I repeat, believes that the alleged criminals must be held responsible for their actions. Moreover, we urge the international community to strive to prevent Afghanistan from re-engaging with the old demons of conflict between the armed clans that have defeated the Taliban today. Cameroon therefore calls for an immediate manifestation of the United Nations presence in Kabul.

Under the powers granted to it by the international community, in particular under Chapter VII of the Charter, the Security Council, with the essential support of all Members of our Organization, must swiftly undertake all necessary actions to restore and maintain peace in Afghanistan and to provide humanitarian assistance to people who have been left destitute and traumatized by an apparently endless civil war.

We must urgently prevent the flames of war from spreading inexorably throughout Afghanistan. We must also recall from this rostrum, however, that it is high time to douse the fires that have been burning for decades in Palestine, a land of peace. We must extinguish the fires that, conflict after conflict, are devastating the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Great Lakes region, as well as those that have consumed Angola for over 25 years. It is high time that, like those who fought the fires in New York on 11 September, we act as firefighters to put an end to the fratricidal wars of the African continent, Central America and other disadvantaged regions of the planet. We must remain vigilant in preserving the particularly fragile peace in the Balkans.

We are convinced that the best firefighter to contain the ravages of war and the threats that loom over peace and security throughout the world is the United Nations. Without the determination of States, however, and the respect of those States for unanimously adopted rules, it is vain to hope to achieve the result targeted for the Organization by the Charter. The activity of the United Nations will have no effect if the resolutions it adopts to contribute to settling a conflict are not respected by the parties concerned and involved.

Why, after more than half a century, have we not been able to end the conflict in the Middle East, in which Palestinians and Israelis are in ever more brutal and violent opposition? Why can we not find the resources necessary to the United Nations to nip in the bud the fratricidal wars that have bled and disrupted entire regions of the African continent since the dawn of independence? These are the persistent questions that haunt international public opinion. Just as all men must naturally be equal before the law, States must be treated on the same footing of equality out of respect for international law and the principles defined by the United Nations.

The implementation of resolutions and recommendations adopted at the Millennium Summit would enable great progress to be made towards the world of harmony that globalization is supposed to establish. Man and the safeguarding of his life and dignity, wherever he may live, must be restored as our priority. Man and the safeguarding of his life and dignity must once again be the central focus of our actions, thoughts and concerns.

The attacks of 11 September in the United States and the spotlighting of international terrorism must prompt us to take action, of course, but it must also and especially lead us to reflection. We have seen how the promoters of those who thus endanger the new world order also invoke a policy of double standards to justify their fanatical acts. We have also read in many of their communiqués their claim to be leading a crusade on behalf of a religious community that, according to them, has been treated unfairly by others. We understand, finally, that they have also cited the living conditions of many hundreds of millions of people, the poorest of the poor, as an argument for fighting that part of the world that plunders and dominates them in a spirit of complete indifference. We must do all we can to avoid giving such excuses and pretexts to individuals and groups who in fact have nothing but criminal motives.

Cameroon has maintained and continues to maintain that the United Nations must, more than ever before, continue to affirm the necessary links of solidarity within the international community and the need for balance in international relations. Support and development assistance for the poorest regions of the world are essentials recalled not only in the resolutions of the Millennium Summit, but also at the most recent Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries, held this year in Brussels. The recovery efforts of the countries of the South — inter alia, the New African Initiative on economic matters —

must be accompanied and supported by the most prosperous States. During the annual session of the Economic and Social Council last summer in Geneva, over which Cameroon had the honour of presiding, these principles and requirements were broadly recalled and, thank goodness, endorsed.

In spite of the commitments undertaken at one world summit after the other, the gap between the regions of the North and the South is growing wider by the day. Destitution, poverty, epidemics, the AIDS pandemic and the technology divide are not matters of fate. Over and above solidarity, a more just and balanced practice of commercial exchange, notably through the opening of markets to the most disadvantaged countries, could also help to bridge that gap. The forthcoming International Conference on Financing for Development, to be held next year in Mexico under United Nations auspices, should provide an opportunity for a deeper reflection on these priorities.

On 1 January 2002, Cameroon will take its place at the Security Council table on behalf of Africa as a non-permanent member. I would like to express on behalf of His Excellency Paul Biya, President of the Republic of Cameroon, all of our gratitude to all of the Member States of our Organization for the confidence placed in my country. In the current international circumstances, we realize the full value of this confidence.

Cameroon is committed to fully assuming its official duties in making its modest contribution, in the Council, to the maintenance of international peace and security.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Kishore Mahbubani, Chairman of the delegation of Singapore.

Mr. Mahbubani (Singapore): It does seem strange to congratulate Minister Han Seung-soo on his appointment as President of the General Assembly so late in this session. But we live in unusual times. The United Nations needs clear leadership. With his distinguished track record in public service in the Republic of Korea, we are confident that Minister Han will provide it to this Assembly. We assure him of our full support.

We also congratulate Mr. Harri Holkeri for his commendable leadership last year and, of course, the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, and the United Nations on the Nobel Peace Prize that they received.

The timing of this General Assembly indicates the difficult circumstances we are in. Never before in its 56-year history has the United Nations had to postpone the general debate. Clearly, the terrorist attacks of 11 September have already had drastic and immediate international consequences. The long-term consequences are still unknown. But we can be sure that they will be both powerful and wide-ranging.

For the short term, the events of 11 September have shaken an already vulnerable world economy. The developed world is suffering a growing economic slowdown. This is well known. Unfortunately, what is less well known are the damaging effects of the terrorist attacks on developing countries. In the developed countries, which provide the principal engine of the world's economy, the attacks have undermined consumer confidence, disrupted commerce and destroyed wealth. But these are temporary shocks from which the developed world can and will recover.

But what the terrorist attacks have dramatically highlighted is the reality of interdependence in today's globalized world. Joseph Stiglitz, a recent Nobel Prize winner, like the United Nations, highlighted this interdependence in a *Washington Post* article dated 11 November 2001. He said, "It used to be said that when America sneezed, Mexico caught a cold. Now, when America sneezes, much of the world catches cold. And according to recent data, America is not just sneezing, it has a bad case of the flu."

Hence, the developing countries, which depend on a healthy global economy for their hopes of growth and prosperity, face great dangers. The fear of terrorism may constrict the key arteries of globalization. We have already seen new precautions taken in many countries, at ports, airports, train stations, banks, media offices, government buildings, factories, offices, hospitals and many other public institutions. These precautions are important to protect innocent people in their daily lives. However, they also inevitably impose additional costs. These new restrictions on travel, on shipping, on national and international mail and on the free flow of goods and information everywhere are effectively a tariff imposed by terrorism upon the global community. Tragically, it is also a regressive tariff, one that affects the poorer members of the global community more.

If the arteries of globalization become increasingly constricted and cease to function effectively, developing countries will lose their best chance of growing out of poverty. This will only aggravate the hopelessness, marginalization, ignorance and fear that can breed terrorism. We must avoid this vicious cycle. In developed countries, the economic slowdown is already strengthening protectionist voices calling for restrictions on imports, the imposition of non-tariff barriers, anti-dumping duties, restrictions on migration and governmental support for domestic industries. A genuine concern over terrorist use of international financial and information networks could also be used as a justification for restrictions on the flows of international investment and information. And developing countries need these flows.

Indeed, even before 11 September, developing countries were not benefiting sufficiently from these flows. The greater part of foreign direct investment (FDI) flows mainly among developed countries. Of the remainder, 12 major developing countries take 75 per cent of private FDI to the developing world, while 140 developing countries take a share of only 5 per cent. The poorest nations of the world therefore suffer not from too many connections with the wider world, but too few. Indeed, the poorest 48 countries account for only 4 per cent of total world trade, while sub-Saharan Africa receives only 5 per cent of the total net long-term private capital flows to developing countries. At the same time, in the developed countries, tariffs on the export of goods of developing countries are 30 per cent higher than the global average. The fact that tariffs on goods of developing countries are 30 per cent higher than the global average is truly a shocking statistic, and we are surprised that this has not been highlighted before in key forums. All this shows that the poor countries cannot afford any further restrictions on trade.

In this regard, we are relieved that the World Trade Organization (WTO) meeting in Doha, Qatar, which ended yesterday, has finally agreed to launch a new round of trade talks that we hope will keep the global economy on track towards freer trade and investment. Today's *Wall Street Journal*, which, as we all know, is a conservative journal, drew this link between the events of 11 September and the results of Doha:

> "In an effort to keep poorer nations on their side in the war on terrorism, United States and European negotiators went further than anyone expected to meet the demands of the developing world. ...
>
> "Ultimately, the United States and Europe made big concessions to the developing world — concessions fiercely resisted by pharmaceutical and steel companies in the United States and farmers in Europe."

This Doha meeting therefore confirmed that the needs of poorer countries will have to be addressed in the months and years to come, because as a result of 11 September, poorer countries will certainly suffer more than richer ones. To give another obvious example, tourism from richer countries is a major source of income for many developing countries. But the fear of flying — which I think has become quite real nowadays — engendered by the recent terrorist attacks has already caused airlines all over the world to cut flight schedules and in many cases terminate them altogether. It is already much harder to get direct flights from, say, New York City to many Latin American destinations. The World Travel and Tourism Council has estimated that the events of 11 September may cause the loss of up to 8.8 million jobs in the travel and tourism industry. Of these, only 2.3 million will be in the United States and Europe. The rest will be in the developing world. Clearly, the impact on developing countries dependent on the tourist trade will be enormous.

The record of the past 30 years shows clearly that countries better integrated into the global economic system have enjoyed greater long-term growth than have relatively isolated countries. I can quote no better authority than the Secretary-General, who has said,

> "Success in achieving sustained growth depends critically on expanding access to the opportunities of globalisation. The countries that have achieved higher growth are those that have successfully integrated into the global economy and attracted foreign investment." (*Making Globalisation Work For The Poor, The Independent, 12 December 2000*)

In a recent book, *The End of Globalization: Lessons from the Great Depression*, the author Harold James examines the fallout from a collapse of the integrated world in an earlier era. He provides a sobering historical perspective on what we are experiencing today. In the era before the First World

War, the world was in many ways a well-integrated place. Movement of capital, knowledge and labour among both rich and poor countries was much less restricted. The rise of protectionism and isolationism in response to this led to the Great Depression of the first half of the twentieth century. This long-lasting global recession ended only with the outbreak of the Second World War. This is not a cycle that we should repeat as we enter the twenty-first century.

One big lesson of 11 September is therefore that globalization, which we assume to be a powerful, irresistible force, is actually a very fragile construct, dependent on the will of its participants for its continuing existence. If it collapses — and the point to bear in mind is that it may collapse — developing countries could suffer more. Hence, the terrorists who destroyed the World Trade Center could also seriously damage the global economic system that represents the best chance that the developing countries have for long-term development, growth and prosperity. If the terrorists succeed, we will all be worse off.

Hence, at the recently concluded summit of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) in Shanghai, China, APEC leaders representing 21 countries, both developed and developing, and coming from three continents, unequivocally condemned terrorist acts as a profound threat to the peace, prosperity and security of all people, all faiths and all nations and pledged to cooperate fully to ensure that international terrorism does not disrupt economies and markets. We are not engaged here merely in a struggle between a few developed nations and a few terrorists. The whole world is involved in this struggle.

Following 11 September, we in the international community must act together to safeguard what we have achieved and what we have yet to achieve. The struggle against terrorism itself will take much time and stamina. To track down the terrorist groups and rip up their networks will be a difficult, long, messy and even tedious business, requiring the cooperative efforts of many countries. Countering terrorism must be an international endeavour, and in this international endeavour the United Nations has a critical role to play.

The United Nations remains the indispensable forum to mobilize international opinion and develop a strong political consensus against terrorism. Through the Security Council, it also provides a platform for practical cooperation, as we saw, for example, in Security Council resolution 1373 (2001). Within the United Nations system several bodies are already seized of the various dimensions of terrorism. One useful course of action would be for the various law enforcement and other agencies dealing with terrorism to get together to examine existing norms and practices and areas for further cooperation. Where such cooperation is already taking place bilaterally or trilaterally among countries, the United Nations can serve as a useful disseminator and clearing house of information and best practices.

In the long term, the economic and social conditions that encourage terrorists must be addressed urgently, and certainly after 11 September, we now know how urgent this task is. International economic integration, while ultimately the only guarantor of prosperity, is today incomplete in scope and uneven in its distribution of costs and benefits. Many developing countries remain imperfectly integrated into the world economy. These problems must be addressed by capacity-building and infrastructure development within developing countries, with whatever international assistance is necessary, and by the elimination of trade barriers and protectionism in the developed countries.

It is useful here to cite the latest World Bank report, which states clearly that abolishing all trade barriers could boost global income by $2.8 trillion — that is an enormous sum — and could also lift as many as 320 million people out of poverty by 2015. We hope that the World Trade Organization negotiators will bear this in mind when they commence the new round of negotiations after the Doha, Qatar, meeting.

To conclude, please allow me to quote the Secretary-General once again:

> "In an increasingly globalized world, none of the critical issues we are dealing with can be resolved within a solely national framework. All of them require cooperation, partnership and burden-sharing among Governments, the United Nations, regional organizations, non-governmental organizations, the private sector and civil society." (*A/56/1, para. 11*)

Global actions, facilitated by consultative leadership, are needed to address challenges of global dimensions. We hope that we can make a small beginning at this session of the General Assembly to do this.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to Her Excellency Ms. Madina Jarbussynova, Chairperson of the delegation of Kazakhstan.

Ms. Jarbussynova (Kazakhstan): This session that is taking place under extraordinary circumstances, when the whole world is still reeling in shock from the world's most terrible terrorist attacks, carried out in New York and Washington. This unprecedented action, aimed against the civilian population, has provided yet one more confirmation that terrorism poses a threat to the whole world and has highlighted the relevance of the proposals to join the international community's efforts in its common fight against terrorism, drug trafficking and organized crime.

Our country calls for international legal norms to be strengthened and for further mobilization of States' efforts to counter international terrorism. Taking into consideration the developments in the world that are identified with this growing threat, we support the initiative regarding the early adoption of a comprehensive convention against international terrorism.

Afghanistan's transformation into one of the sore spots of our planet was a matter of concern for Kazakhstan well before the events of 11 September. During the Millennium Summit, the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Nursultan Nazarbaev, taking into account the potential danger of a spillover of the intra-Afghan conflict, proposed to convene a special meeting of the Security Council devoted to the consideration of the situation in Afghanistan and Central Asia in order to devise comprehensive measures to settle the situation in the Islamic State of Afghanistan.

Welcoming Security Council resolution 1378 (2001), unanimously adopted on 14 November, we share the Secretary-General's view that the Security Council should adopt a comprehensive approach to settling the situation in the Islamic State of Afghanistan and its political, military, economic, humanitarian and human rights dimensions. Such an approach, in his opinion, ought to be based on a careful diagnosis of the current situation in Afghanistan, based on the premise that no military solution to the Afghan conflict is possible, or indeed acceptable, since territorial gains achieved on the battlefield do not constitute a basis for the legitimatization of power.

The issue of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation is of special significance to our country. This year we mark the tenth anniversary of our independence, as well as the tenth anniversary of the shutdown of the Semipalatinsk nuclear testing ground, which represented an important step towards a nuclear-free, stable and safe world and its deliverance from the spectre of global Armageddon. The harm that was done first and foremost to the people of Kazakhstan was acknowledged by the participants of the conference entitled "The Twenty-First Century: Towards a Nuclear-Weapon-Free World", which was held from 29 to 30 August 2001 in Almaty.

Nuclear-weapon tests have caused the destruction of the landscape, ecosystem, economic structure and traditional way of life of the people in the affected areas, which happen to be the historical centres of Kazakh statehood and culture. We are grateful to our partners who, in line with the three resolutions adopted by the General Assembly, are helping to rehabilitate the area of the testing ground, including the conversion of infrastructure. Yet, much remains to be done. We believe that the financial aid, experience and expertise of international organizations, donor countries and non-governmental entities play an important role in addressing the problems of the affected region. The outcome of the Almaty Conference has demonstrated that the well-being of the planet, which is so cherished, should be achieved not through threats and the use of weapons, but exclusively through peaceful means such as negotiation and dialogue.

Acknowledging the necessity of strengthening stability and security at both the regional and global levels, the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Mr. Nursultan Nazarbaev, addressing the forty-seventh session of the General Assembly, put forward an initiative to convene a conference on interaction and confidence-building measures in Asia. Leaders of 16 Asian countries are to meet for the first time in Almaty in the first half of the year 2002 to discuss threats to regional peace and security, to arrive at a shared vision of forms and modalities of addressing such threats and to agree on confidence-building measures and the establishment of the structures and institutions of the Conference. The work carried out so far shows that compromise solutions are quite possible, even with respect to differences that seem irreconcilable. In that context, the Conference represents a forum based on principles that are conceptually new for Asia, namely,

trust and cooperation as a means to ensure security and stability.

Globalization, which has become a dominant factor in international life, opens up vast opportunities for social and economic development. At the same time the United Nations should actively help to solve current global trends associated with serious problems. We call for an increased contribution on the part of the Organization to improving the global environment for sustainable development and to bridging the gap between developed and developing countries. The development of a globalization model for the modern world — beginning with its economic component — that would fully take into account the interests of all countries could become a priority objective of the Organization within the framework of the current reforms at the United Nations. More active efforts by the United Nations to promote the integration of economies in transition into the world economy are becoming especially important for Kazakhstan.

Against the background of irreversible growth in global interrelationship, regional integration, which is actively supported by our country, is gaining momentum. Kazakhstan attaches great importance to cooperation within the framework of the Economic Cooperation Organization, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, the Eurasian Economic Community, the Central Asian Economic Community and other regional economic organizations, and will contribute as much as it can to building up their capacity and their international standing. We consider it a priority to develop cooperation with the United Nations in such areas as strengthening the social security system through efforts to fight poverty and unemployment; developing transportation infrastructure by maintaining and improving highways and railroads; solving the problems of rivers in border areas; and supplying drinking water in a number of regions.

We intend to take full advantage of the geographical position of our country and of the favourable location of continental transit routes. That endeavour will be helped by an international ministerial conference of land-locked countries devoted to transit and transportation issues, which will be convened in Kazakhstan in 2003 with the assistance of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development.

A transition to environmentally sound and sustainable development is a priority goal of the strategy to ensure the economic growth of Kazakhstan. Stabilizing and improving the quality of the environment in the Aral Sea basin are of overriding importance to our country. Kazakhstan has called, and will continue to call, for an integrated approach to solving the problems of the Aral Sea and for wider participation in the effort being made by the programmes of the United Nations system.

The participation of the United Nations is also important in solving the host of problems related to the development of the Caspian Sea region. The problem of the Caspian Sea has outgrown its regional boundaries and has become global. As an effective tool of regional and global economic partnership, the United Nations has a role to play to implement a policy of preventive diplomacy in the region in order to work out an agreed programme for the development of the Caspian Sea.

The process of globalization, which is characterized by growing interdependence among States in all spheres of life, presents new challenges for the international community. In those circumstances, multilateral efforts by the community of nations to find adequate answers to new challenges and threats play an exceptionally important role. Kazakhstan supports strengthening the central role and authority of the United Nations in efforts to ensure global stability and to build equitable relations between States and peoples based on mutual respect and universal values. We call for increased efficiency of the United Nations system as a whole, including the Security Council, its principal organ responsible for the maintenance of international peace and security. In that regard, Kazakhstan fully supports the need for adequate implementation of the decisions taken at the Millennium Summit and fully shares the development goals and objectives set out by the international community in the Millennium Declaration.

The recent decision to award the Nobel Peace Prize to the United Nations and its Secretary-General is a sign of recognition of the Organization's contribution to strengthening international cooperation — cooperation aimed at the maintenance of peace and security for the sake of succeeding generations and in the interests of the prosperity of the peoples of all countries. That award has demonstrated that the United

Nations plays a special role in efforts to strengthen global partnerships for international purposes.

The President in the Chair.

Programme of work

The President: Tomorrow morning, Friday, 16 November 2001, at 9 a.m., the General Assembly will consider, as the first item, the fourth report of the General Committee, on action taken by the Committee this morning. Thereafter, the Assembly will continue with the general debate. The fourth report of the General Committee, document A/56/250/Add.3, will be circulated tomorrow morning.

The meeting rose at 1.15 p.m.